

COWPER'S LETTERS

WITH INTRODUCTION AND QUESTIONS

BY

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Calcutta:

S. K. LAHIRI & CO.

PUBLISHERS AND BOOKSELLERS,

54, COLLEGE STREET,

1893

CALCUTTA,
 PRINTED BY N C PAL, AT THE INDIAN PATRIOT PRESS,
 108, BARANASI CHOWSE'S STREET

*The following letters are to be read by B. A. Students
for 1894 and 1895.*

No. of letter.		Date.	Pages.
1	To C. Rowley, Esq.,	... Sep. 2, 1762.	1
2	" Lady Heaketh	. Aug. 9, 1763.	2
3	" Joseph Hill Esq.,	.. June 24, 1765.	4
4	" Lady Heaketh,	... July 1, 1765.	5
5	" Joseph Hill Esq.,	.. July 3, 1765.	6
6	" Lady Heaketh,	.. July 4, 1765.	8
10	" Joseph Hill, Esq.,	. Aug. 14, 1765.	16
13	" Lady Heaketh,	. Sep. 14, 1765.	21
17	" Joseph Hill, Esq.,	. Oct. 25, 1765.	27
30	" Mrs Cowper,	.. Oct. 20, 1766.	44
36	" Joseph Hill, Esq.,	May 14, 1767.	52
39	" Do. Do.	.. July 16, 1767.	55
41	" Do. Do.	Oct. 10, 1767.	57
50	" Mrs. Cowper,	Aug. 31, 1769.	63
54	" Mrs Madan Stafford Row,	Mar 24, 1770	66
58	" Joseph Hill, Esq.,	.. Sep 25, 1770	71
69	" Do. Do.	Nov 12, 1776.	78
83	" Rev. W. Unwin,	July 18, 1778.	86
86	" Do. Do.	.. May 26, 1779	89
87	" Do. Do.	. July 1779	90
88	" Do. Do.	July 17, 1779	91
90	" Do. Do.	Sep 21, 1779	94
91	" Joseph Hill Esq ,	Oct. 2, 1779	96
92	" Rev W Unwin,	Oct. 31, 1779	96
96	" Do. Do.	Feb 27, 1780.	102
103	" Rev. John Newton	May 3, 1780	112
120	" Rev. W. Unwin,	July 27, 1790	137
124	" Rev. John Newton,	Aug 21, 1780	141
139	" Do. Do	Jan 21, 1781	164
141	" Rev. W. Unwin,	Feb 6, 1781	168
143	" Joseph Hill, Esq ,	Feb 15, 1781	171
144	" Rev. John Newton,	... Feb. 18, 1781.	173
147	" Rev. W. Unwin,	. Feb. 27, 1781	179
153	" Do. Do.	... May 1, 1781.	183
154	" Do. Do.	. May 9, 1781.	185
155	" Do. Do.	.. May 10, 1781.	186
158	" Do. Do.	... May 23, 1781	201
164	" Rev. John Newton,	... July 12, 1781.	215
168	" Do. Do.	.. Aug. 16, 1781.	223

No. of letter.		Date.	Pages.
169	" Do. Do.	" Aug. 21, 1781.	226
172	" Do. Do.	" Sep. 9, 1781.	232
175	" Do. Do.	" Sep. 18, 1781.	235
186	" Do. Do.	" Nov. 7, 1781.	252
194	" Joseph Hill, Esq.,	" Nov. 30, 1781.	258
202	" Rev. W. Unwin,	" Jan. 5, 1782.	282
219	" Do. Do.	" April 1, 1782.	315
227	" Do. Do.	" Aug. 3, 1782.	333
239	" Mrs. Newton,	" Nov. 23, 1782.	352
242	" Joseph Hill, Esq.,	" Dec. 7, 1782.	357
244	" Rev. John Newton,	" Jan. 26, 1783.	360
251	" Rev. W. Unwin,	" May 12, 1783.	370
254	" Rev. W. Bull,	" June 3, 1783.	374
255	" Rev. W. Unwin	" June 8, 1783.	375
261	" Do. Do.	" Aug. 4, 1783.	384
272	" Do. Do.	" 1783.	405
273	" Rev. John Newton,	" Nov. 30, 1783.	407
284	" Rev. W. Unwin,	" Mar. 21, 1784.	430
285	" Rev. John Newton,	" Mar. 29, 1784.	432
287	" Do. Do.	" April 26, 1784.	433
291	" Rev. W. Unwin,	" July 3, 1784.	445
300	" Rev. John Newton,	" Sep. 18, 1784.	463
304	" Rev. W. Unwin,	" Oct. 20, 1784.	470
306	" Do. Do.	" Nov. 1, 1784.	476
308	" Rev. John Newton,	" Nov. 27, 1784.	479
310	" Do. Do.	" Dec. 11, 1784.	483*
311	" Rev. W. Unwin,	" Dec. 18, 1784.	485
318	" Do. Do.	" April 30, 1785.	497
324	" Rev. John Newton,	" Sept. 24, 1785.	511
326	" Lady Hesketh	" Oct. 17, 1785.	515
327	" Do. Do.	" Nov. 9, 1785.	518
341	" Do. Do.	" Feb. 9, 1786.	546
349	" Do. Do.	" April 10, 1786.	566
354	" Rev. John Newton,	" May 20, 1786.	582
355	" Lady Hesketh	" May 25, 1786.	585
356	" Do. Do.	" May 29, 1786.	588
358	" Joseph Hill Esq.	" June 9, 1786.	592
359	" Lady Hesketh,	" June 12, 1786.	593
369	" Rev. W. Unwin	" 1786	612
372	" Do. Do.	" Sep. 24, 1786.	616
384	" Mr. Johnson	" 1791.	639

* This letter bears the date 13th in the G. T. S. but in the other edition we find 11th.

THE
LETTERS
OF



WILLIAM COWPER,

1762.

I.

**CONTENTED POVERTY—MEN GUIDED BY THEIR
NATURAL TEMPER,**

TO CLOTHWORTHY ROWLEY, ESQ., AT TENDRING HALL, NEAR
IPSWICH.

DEAR ROWLEY,

September 2, 1762

Your letter has taken me just in the crisis ; to-morrow I set off for Brighthelmston, and there I stay till the winter brings us all to town again. This world is a shabby fellow, and uses us ill, but a few years hence there will be no difference between us and our fathers of the tenth generation upwards. I could be as splenetic as you, and with more reason, if I thought proper to indulge that humour ; but my resolution is, (and I would advice you to adopt it,) never to be melancholy while I have a hundred pounds in the world to keep up my spirits. God knows how long that will be ; but in the meantime *To Triumph* ! If a great man struggling with misfortune is a noble object, a little man that despises them is no contemptible one ; and this is all the philosophy I have in the world at present. It savours pretty much of the ancient Stoic, but till the Stoics became coxcombs, they were, in my opinion, a very sensible sect.

If my resolution to be a great man was half so strong as it is to despise the shame of being a little one, I should not

despair of a house in Lincoln's Inn Fields, with all its appurtenances ; for there is nothing more certain, and I could prove it by a thousand instances, than that every man may be rich if he will. What is the industry of half the industrious men in the world but avarice, and call it by which name you will, it almost always succeeds. But this provokes me, that a covetous dog who will work by candle-light in a morning, to get what he does not want, shall be praised for his thriftiness, while a gentleman shall be abused for submitting to his wants, rather than work like an ass to relieve them. Did you ever in your life know a man who was guided in the general course of his actions by anything but his natural temper ? And yet we blame each other's conduct as freely as if that temper was the most tractable beast in the world, and we had nothing to do but to twitch the rein to the right or the left, and go just as we are directed by others ! All this is nonsense, and nothing better.

There are some sensible folks, who having great estates have wisdom enough too to spend them properly ; there are others who are not less wise, perhaps, as knowing how to shift without 'em. Between these two degrees are they who spend their money dirtily, or get it so. If you ask me where they are to be placed who amass much wealth in an honest way, you must be so good as to find them first, and then I'll answer the question. Upon the whole, my dear Rowley, there is a degree of poverty that has no disgrace belonging to it ; that degree of it, I mean, in which a man enjoys clean linen and good company, and if I never sink below this degree of it, I care not if I never rise above it. This is a strange epistle, nor can I imagine how the devil I came to write it but here it is, such as it is, and much good may do you with it. I have no estate as it happens, so if it should fall into bad hands, I shall be in no danger of a commission of lunacy, Adieu ! Carr is well, and gives his love to you

Yours ever,

WM COWPER.

1763.

II.

**HIS DREAMINGS—SINGULAR TEMPER—PURPOSE
OF GOING TO MARGATE—HIS CHARACTER
NOW FIXED.**

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

The Temple, Aug 9, 1763

Having promised me to write to you, I make haste to be as good as my word. I have a pleasure in writing to you at any time, but especially at the present, when my days are spent in reading the Journals, and my nights in dreaming of them. An employment not very agreeable to a head that has long been habituated to the luxury of choosing its subject, and has been as little employed upon business, as if it had grown upon the shoulders of a much wealthier gentleman. But the numskull pays for it now, and will not presently forget the discipline it has undergone lately. If I succeed in this doubtful piece of promotion, I shall have at least this satisfaction to reflect upon, that the volumes I write will be treasured up with the utmost care for ages, and will last as long as the English constitution,—a duration which ought to satisfy the vanity of any author who has a spark of love for his country. O ! my good cousin ! if I was to open my heart to you, I could show you strange sights, nothing, I flatter myself, that would shock you, but a great deal that would make you wonder. I am of a very singular temper, and very unlike all the men that I have ever conversed with. Certainly I am not an absolute fool, but I have more weakness than the greatest of all the fools I can recollect at present. In short, if I was as fit for the next world, as I am unfit for this,—and God forbid I should speak it in vanity ! I would not change conditions with any saint in Christendom.

My destination is settled at last, and I have obtained a furlough. Margate is the word, and what do you think will ensue, cousin ? I know what you expect, but ever since I was born I have been good at disappointing the most natural expectations. Many years ago, cousin, there was a

possibility I might prove a very different thing from what I am at present." My character is now fixed, and rivetted fast upon me, and, between friends, is not a very splendid one, or likely to be guilty of much fascination.

Adieu, my dear cousin ! So much as I love you, I wonder how the deuce it has happened I was never in love with you. Thank Heaven that I never was, for at this time I have had a pleasure in writing to you, which in that case I should have forfeited. Let me hear from you, or I shall reap but half the reward that is due to my noble indifference.

Yours ever, and evermore,

W. C.

1765.

III.

RESTORATION TO HEALTH—HUNTINGDON— RIVER OUSE.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ, COOK'S COURT, CAREY STREET,
LONDON.

DEAR JON,

Huntingdon, June 24, 1765.

THE only recompense I can make you for your kind attention to my affairs during my illness, is to tell you, that by the mercy of God I am restored to perfect health both of mind and body. This I believe will give you pleasure ; and I would gladly do any thing from which you could receive it.

I left St Alban's on the seventeenth, and arrived that day at Cambridge, spent some time there with my brother, and came hither on the twenty-second. I have a lodging that puts me continually in mind of our summer excursions, we have had many worse, and except the size of it, (which however is sufficient for a single man,) but few better. I am not quite alone, having brought a servant with me from St Alban's, who is the very mirror of fidelity and affection for his master. And whereas the Turkish Spy says, he kept no servant, because he would not have an enemy in his house, I hired mine because I would have a friend. Men do not usually bestow these encomiums on their lackeys, nor

do they usually deserve them ; but I have had experience of mine, both in sickness and in health, and never saw his fellow

The river Ouse, (I forget how they spell it,) is the most agreeable circumstance in this part of the world , at this town it is I believe as wide as the Thames at Windsor , nor does the silver Thames better deserve that epithet, nor has it more flowers upon its banks, these being attributes which in strict truth belong to neither Fluellen would say, they are as like as my fingers to my fingers, and there is salmon in both It is a noble stream to bathe in, and I shall make that use of it three times a week, having introduced myself to it for the first time this morning

I beg you will remember me to all my friends, which is a task will cost you no great pains to execute particularly remember me to those of your own house, and believe me

Your very affectionate

W C

IV

**ILLNESS AND RECOVERY—LONELY BUT HAPPY
LIFE AT HUNTINGDON.**

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

Huntingdon, July 1, 1765

Since the visit you were so kind as to pay me in the Temple (the only time I ever saw you without pleasure), what have I not suffered ! And since it has pleased God to restore me to the use of my reason, what have I not enjoyed ! You know by experience, how pleasant it is to feel the first approaches of health after a fever , but, Oh the fever of the brain ! To feel the quenching of that fire is indeed a blessing which I think it impossible to receive without the most consummate gratitude Terrible as this chastisement is, I acknowledge in it the hand of an infinite justice , nor is it at all more difficult for me to perceive in it the hand of an infinite mercy likewise . when I consider the effect it has had upon me, I am exceedingly thankful for it, and, without hypocrisy, esteem it the greatest

blessing, next to life itself, I ever received from the divine bounty. I pray God that I may ever retain this sense of it, and then I am sure I shall continue to be, as I am at present, really happy.

I write thus to you that you may not think me a forlorn and wretched creature, which you might be apt to do, considering my very distant removal from every friend I have in the world, a circumstance which, before this event befell me, would undoubtedly have made me so: but my affliction has taught me a road to happiness which without it I should never have found, and I know, and have experience of it every day, that the mercy of God, to him who believes himself the object of it, is more than sufficient to compensate for the loss of every other blessing.

You may now inform all those whom you think really interested in my welfare, that they have no need to be apprehensive on the score of my happiness at present. And you yourself will believe that my happiness is no dream, because I have told you the foundation on which it is built. What I have written would appear like enthusiasm to many, for we are apt to give that name to every warm affection of the mind in others which we have not experienced in ourselves, but to you, who have so much to be thankful for, and a temper inclined to gratitude, it will not appear so.

I beg you will give my love to Sir Thomas, and believe that I am obliged to you both for inquiring after me at St. Alban's.

Yours ever,

W. C.

V.

**DIFFICULTY OF KEEPING HOUSE—LIFE 'AT
HUNTINGDON—LONG LETTERS—
PLAYWRIGHTS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JON,

Huntingdon, July 3, 1765.

WHATEVER you may think of the matter, it is no such easy thing to keep house for two people. A man cannot always live upon sheep's heads, and liver and lights, like the lions in the Tower, and a joint of meat, in so small a family, is

an endless encumbrance. My butcher's bill for last week amounted to four shillings and ten-pence. I set off with a leg of lamb, and was forced to give part of it away to my washer woman. Then I made an experiment upon a sheep's heart, and that was too little. Next I put three pounds of beef into a pie, and this had like to have been too much, for it lasted three days, though my landlord was admitted to a share in it. Then as to small beer, I am puzzled to pieces about it. I have bought as much for a shilling, as will serve us at least a month, and it is grown sour already. In short, I never knew how to pity poor house-keepers before, but now I cease to wonder at that politic cast which their occupation usually gives to their countenance, for it is really a matter full of perplexity.

I have received but one visit since here I came. I don't mean that I have refused any, but that only one has been offered. This was from my woollen-draper, a very healthy, wealthy, sensible, sponsonible man, and extremely civil. He has a cold bath, and has promised me a key of it, which I shall probably make use of in the winter. He has undertaken too, to get me the St. James's Chronicle three times a-week, and to show me Hinchinbrook House, and to do every service for me in his power, so that I did not exceed the truth, you see, when I spoke of his civility. Here is a card-assembly, and a dancing-assembly, and a horse-race, and a club, and a bowling-green, so that I am well off, you perceive, in point of diversions, especially as I shall go to 'em, just as much as I should if I lived a thousand miles off. But no matter for that; the spectator at a play is more entertained than the actor, and in real life it is much the same. You will say, perhaps, that if I never frequent these places, I shall not come within the description of a spectator, and you will say right. I have made a blunder, which shall be corrected in the next edition.

You are an old dog at a bad tenant; witness all my uncle's and your mother's geese and gridirons. There is something so extremely impertinent in entering upon a man's premises, and using them without paying for 'em, that I could easily resent it if I would. But I rather choose to entertain myself with thinking how you will scour the man

about, and worry him to death, if once you begin with him. Poor toad ! Leave him entirely to your mercy

My dear Joe, you desire me to write long letters—I have neither matter enough, nor perseverance enough for the purpose. However, if you can but contrive to be tired of reading as soon as I am tired of writing, we shall find that short ones answer just as well, and, in my opinion, this is a very practicable measure.

My friend Colman has had good fortune, I wish him better fortune still, which is, that he may make a right use of it. The tragedies of Lloyd and Bensley are both very deep. If they are not of use to the surviving part of society, it is their own fault

I was debtor to Bensley seven pounds, or nine, I forget which. If you can find out his brother, you will do me a great favour, if you will pay him for me, but do it at your leisure

Yours and theirs,

W C

VI

LATE MELANCHOLY—PRETENDED BELIEVERS— DOCTOR COTTON'S TREATMENT

TO LADY HESKETH

Huntingdon, July 4, 1765

BEING just emerged from the Ouse, I sit down to thank you, my dear cousin, for your friendly and comfortable letter. What could you think of my unaccountable behaviour to you in that visit I mentioned in my last? I remember I neither spoke to you, nor looked at you. The solution of the mystery indeed followed soon after, but at the time it must have been inexplicable. The uproar within was even then begun, and my silence was only the sulkiness of a thunder-storm before it opens. I am glad, however, that the only instance in which I knew not how to value your company was, when I was not in my senses. It was the first of the kind, and I trust in God it will be the last.

How naturally does affliction make us Christians ! and how impossible is it when all human help is ^{vain}, and the whole Earth too poor and trifling to furnish us with one moment's peace, how impossible is it then to avoid looking at the Gospel ! It gives me some concern, though at the same time it increases my gratitude, to reflect that a convert made in Bedlam is more likely to be a stumbling block to others, than to advance their faith. But if it has that effect upon any, it is owing to their reasoning amiss, and drawing their conclusions from false premises. He who can ascribe an amendment of life and manners, and a reformation of the heart itself, to madness, is guilty of an absurdity that in any other case would fasten the imputation of madness upon himself, for by so doing he ascribes a reasonable effect to an unreasonable cause, and a positive effect to a negative. But when Christianity only is to be sacrificed, he that stabs deepest is always the wisest man. You, my dear cousin, yourself will be apt to think I carry the matter too far, and that in the present warmth of my heart I make too ample a concession in saying, that I am *only now* a convert. You think I always believed, and I thought so too ; but you were deceived, and so was I. I called myself indeed a Christian ; but He who knows my heart knows that I never did a right thing, nor abstained from a wrong one, because I was so, but if I did either, it was under the influence of some other motive. And it is such seeming Christians, such pretending believers, that do most mischief to the cause, and furnish the strongest arguments to support the infidelity of its enemies unless profession and conduct go together, the man's life is a lie, and the validity of what he professes itself is called in question. The difference between a Christian and an Unbeliever would be so striking, if the treacherous allies of the Church would go over at once to the other side, that I am satisfied religion would be no loser by the bargain.

I reckon it one instance of the Providence that has attended me throughout this whole event, that instead of being delivered into the hands of one of the London physicians, who were so much nearer that I wonder I was not, I was carried to Doctor Cotton. I was not only treated by him

with the greatest tenderness while I was ill, and attended with the utmost diligence, but when my reason was restored to me, and I had so much need of a religious friend to converse with, to whom I could open my mind upon the subject without reserve, I could hardly have found a fitter person for the purpose. My eagerness and anxiety to settle my opinions upon that long neglected point made it necessary that, while my mind was yet weak, and my spirits uncertain, I should have some assistance. The doctor was as ready to administer relief to me in this article likewise, and as well qualified to do it, as in that which was more immediately his province. How many physicians would have thought this an irregular appetite, and a symptom of remaining madness ! But if it were so, my friend was as mad as myself, and it is well for me that he was so.

My dear cousin, you know not half the deliverances I have received, my brother is the only one in the family who does. My recovery is indeed a signal one, but a greater, if possible, went before it. My future life must express my thankfulness, for by words I cannot do it.

I pray God to bless you and my friend Sir Thomas.

Yours ever,

W. C.

VII

LONG SILENCE--MR. HODGSON THE CLERGY- MAN--HERTFORD--DISTANCE FROM HIS BROTHER AT CAMBRIDGE

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAR LADY HESKETH,

Huntingdon, July 5, 1765.

My pen runs so fast you will begin to wish you had not put it in motion, but you must consider we have not met even by letter almost these two years, which will account in some measure for my pestering you in this manner, besides, my last was no answer to yours, and therefore I consider myself as still in your debt. To say truth, I have this long time promised myself a correspondence with you as one of my principal pleasures.

I should have written to you from St. Alban's long since, but was willing to perform quarantine first, both for my own sake and because I thought my letters would be more satisfactory to you from any other quarter. You will perceive I allowed myself a very sufficient time for the purpose, for I date my recovery from the twenty-fifth of last July, having been ill seven months, and well twelve months. It was on that day my brother came to see me I was far from well when he came in, yet, though he only staid one day with me, his company served to put to flight a thousand deliriums and delusions which I still laboured under, and the next morning I found myself a new creature But to the present purpose.

As far as I am acquainted with this place, I like it extremely Mr Hodgson, the minister of the parish, made me a visit the day before yesterday He is very sensible, a good preacher, and conscientious in the discharge of his duty. He is very well known to Doctor Newton, Bishop of Bristol, the author of the treatise on the Prophecies, one of our best Bishops, and who has written the most demonstrative proof of the truth of Christianity, in my mind, that ever was published

There is a village called HERTFORD, about a mile and a half from hence The church there is very prettily situated upon a rising ground, so close to the river that it washes the wall of the churchyard I found an epitaph there the other morning, the two first lines of which being better than any thing else I saw there I made shift to remember It is by a widow on her husband.

"Thou wast too good to live on earth with me,
And I not good enough to die with thee"

The distance of this place from Cambridge is the worst circumstance belonging to it My brother and I are fifteen miles asunder, which, considering that I came hither for the sake of being near him, is rather too much I wish that young man was better known in the family He has as many good qualities as his nearest kindred could wish to find in him

As Mr Quin very roundly expressed himself upon some such occasion, "here is very plentiful accommodation, and

great happiness of provision" So that if I starve, it must be through forgetfulness, rather than scarcity.

Fare thee well, my good and dear cousin.

Ever yours,

W. C.

VIII.

**STORY OF DR. YOUNG THE POET—DR. NEWTON'S
BOOKS ON PROPHECIES—ROMAN
CATHOLIC FAITH.**

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAR COUSIN,

July 12, 1765.

You are very good to me, and if you will only continue to write at such intervals as you find convenient, I shall receive all that pleasure which I proposed to myself from our correspondence. I desire no more than that you would never drop me for any great length of time together, for I shall then think you only write because something happened to put you in mind of me, or for some other reason equally mortifying. I am not, however, so unreasonable as to expect you should perform this act of friendship so frequently as myself, for you live in a world swarming with engagements, and my hours are almost all my own. You must every day be employed in doing what is expected from you by a thousand others, and I have nothing to do but what is most agreeable to myself.

Our mentioning Newton's treatise on the Prophecies brings to my mind an anecdote of Dr. Young, who, you know, died lately at Welwyn. Dr. Cotton, who was intimate with him, paid him a visit about a fortnight before he was seized with his last illness. The old man was then in perfect health, the antiquity of his person, the gravity of his utterance, and the earnestness with which he discoursed about religion, gave him, in the doctor's eye, the appearance of a prophet. They had been delivering their sentiments upon this book of Newton, when Young closed the conference thus—"My friend, there are two considerations upon which my faith in Christ is built as upon a rock: the fall of man, the redemption of man, and the resurrection

of man, the three cardinal articles of our religion, are such as human ingenuity could never have invented, therefore they must be divine —The other argument is this If the Prophecies have been fulfilled (of which there is abundant demonstration) the Scripture must be the word of God, and if the Scripture is the word of God, Christianity must be true”

This treatise on the Prophecies serves a double purpose : it not only proves the truth of religion, in a manner that never has been nor ever can be controverted, but it proves likewise, that the Roman Catholic is the apostate and anti-christian church, so frequently foretold both in the Old and New Testaments Indeed, so fatally connected is the refutation of Popery with the truth of Christianity, when the latter is evinced by the completion of the Prophecies, that in proportion as light is thrown upon the one, the deformities and errors of the other are more plainly exhibited But I leave you to the book itself, there are parts of it which may possibly afford you less entertainment than the rest, because you have never been a school boy, but in the main it is so interesting, and you are so fond of that which is so, that I am sure you will like it.

My dear cousin, how happy am I in having a friend to whom I can open my heart upon these subjects ! I have many intimates in the world, and have had many more than I shall have hereafter, to whom a long letter upon these most important articles would appear tiresome, at least, if not impertinent But I am not afraid of meeting with that reception from you, who have never yet made it your interest that there should be no truth in the word of God May this everlasting truth be your comfort while you live, and attend you with peace and joy in your last moments ! I love you too well not to make this a part of my prayers, and when I remember my friends on these occasions, there is no likelihood that you can be forgotten.

Yours ever,

W. C.

P S. Cambridge —I add this postscript at my brother's rooms He desires to be affectionately remembered to you,

and if you are in town about a fortnight hence, when he proposes to be^e there himself, will take a breakfast with you.

IX.

**THE MAJOR—PREVAILING WANT OF RELIGION—
SUBLIMITY OF THE SCRIPTURES.**

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, August 1, 1765

IF I was to measure your obligation to write by my own desire to hear from you, I should call you an idle correspondent if a post went by without bringing me a letter, but I am not so unreasonable, on the contrary, I think myself very happy in hearing from you upon your own terms, as you find most convenient. Your short history of my family is a very acceptable part of your letter, if they really interest themselves in my welfare, it is a mark of their great charity for one who has been a disappointment and a vexation to them ever since he has been of consequence enough to be either. My friend the Major's behaviour to me, after all he suffered by my abandoning his interest and my own in so miserable a manner, is a noble instance of generosity and true greatness of mind: and indeed I know no man in whom those qualities are more conspicuous. one need only furnish him with an opportunity to display them, and they are always ready to show themselves in his words and actions, and even in his countenance, at a moment's warning. I have great reason to be thankful—I have lost none of my acquaintance but those whom I determined not to keep. I am sorry this class is so numerous. What would I not give, that every friend I have in the world were not almost but altogether Christians! My dear cousin, I am half afraid to talk in this style, lest I should seem to indulge a censorious humour, instead of hoping, as I ought, the best for all men. But what can be said against ocular proof? and what is hope when it is built upon presumption? To use the most Holy Name in the universe for no purpose, or a bad one, contrary to his own express commandment, to pass the day, and the succeeding

days, weeks, and months, and years, without one act of private devotion, one confession of our sins, or one thank-word giving for the numberless blessings we enjoy, to hear the word of God in public with a distracted attention, or with none at all, to absent ourselves voluntarily from the blessed communion, and to live in the total neglect of it, though our Saviour has charged it upon us with an express injunction, are the common and ordinary liberties which the generality of professors allow themselves: and what is this but to live without God in the world? Many causes may be assigned for this anti-christian spirit, so prevalent among Christians, but one of the principal I take to be their utter forgetfulness that they have the word of God in their possession.

My friend Sir William Russel was distantly related to a very accomplished man, who, though he never believed the Gospel, admired the Scriptures as the sublimest compositions in the world, and read them often. I have been intimate myself with a man of fine taste, who has confessed to me that, though he could not subscribe to the truth of Christianity itself, yet he never could read St Luke's account of our Saviour's appearance to the two disciples going to Emmaus, without being wonderfully affected by it, and he thought that if the stamp of divinity was any where to be found in Scripture, it was strongly marked and visibly impressed upon that passage. If these men, whose hearts were chilled with the darkness of infidelity, could find such charms in the mere style of the Scripture, what must they find there, whose eye penetrates deeper than the letter, and who firmly believe themselves interested in all the invaluable privileges of the Gospel? "He that believeth on me is passed from death unto life," though it be as plain a sentence as words can form, has more beauties in it for such a person than all the labours antiquity can boast of. If my poor man of taste, whom I have just mentioned, had searched a little further, he might have found other parts of the sacred history as strongly marked with the characters of divinity as that he mentioned. The parable of the prodigal son, the most beautiful fiction that ever was invented, our Saviour's speech to his disciples, with which he closes his

earthly ministration, full of the sublimest dignity and tenderest affection; surpass every thing that I ever read, and, like the Spirit by which they were dictated, fly directly to the heart. If the Scripture did not disdain all affectation of ornament, one should call these, and such as these, the ornamental parts of it; but the matter of it is that upon which it principally stakes its credit with us, and the style, however excellent and peculiar to itself, is only one of those many external evidences by which it recommends itself to our belief.

I shall be very much obliged to you for the book you mention, you could not have sent me any thing that would have been more welcome, unless you had sent me your own meditations instead of them.

Yours,

W. C.

X.

**EXPECTED VISIT OF FRIENDS—PAYMENT TO
HIS PHYSICIAN.**

TO JOSEPH HILL ESQ

DEAR JOE,

August 14, 1765.

BOTH Lady Hesketh and my brother had apprized me of your intention to give me a call, and herein I find they were both mistaken. But they both informed me, likewise, that you were already set out for Warwickshire; in consequence of which latter intelligence, I have lived in continual expectation of seeing you, any time this fortnight. Now how these two ingenious personages (for such they are both) should mistake an expedition to French Flanders for a journey to Warwickshire, is more than I, with all my ingenuity, can imagine. I am glad however, that I have still a chance of seeing you, and shall treasure it up amongst my agreeable expectations. In the mean time you are welcome to the British shore, as the song has it, and I thank you for your epitome of your travels. You don't tell me how you escaped the vigilance of the custom house officers, though I dare say you were knuckle-deep in contrabands, and had your boots stuffed with all and all manner of unlawful wares and merchandizes.

You know, Joe, I am very deep in debt to my little physician at St. Alban's, and that the handsomest thing I can do will be to pay him *le plutot qu'il sera possible*, (this is vile French, I believe, but you can now correct it) My brother informs me that you have such a quantity of cash in your hands, on my account, that I may venture to send him forty pounds immediately. This, therefore, I shall be obliged if you will manage for me, and when you receive the hundred pounds which my brother likewise brags you are shortly to receive, I shall be glad if you will discharge the remainder of that debt without waiting for any further advice from your humble servant.

I am become a professed horseman, and do hereby assume to myself the style and title of the Knight of the Bloody Spur. It has cost me much to bring this point to bear, but I think I have at last accomplished it. My love to all your family

Yours ever.

W C

 XI.

THE MEDITATIONS—IMPORTANCE OF FAITH.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Huntingdon, August 17, 1765

You told me, my dear cousin, that I need not fear writing too often, and you perceive I take you at your word. At present, however, I shall do little more than thank you for the Meditations, which I admire exceedingly. The author of them manifestly loved the truth with an undisssembled affection, had made a great progress in the knowledge of it, and experienced all the happiness that naturally results from that noblest of all attainments. There is one circumstance, which he gives us frequent occasion to observe in him, which I believe will ever be found in the philosophy of every true Christian. I mean the eminent rank which he assigns to faith among the virtues, as the source and parent of them all. There is nothing more infallibly true than this, and doubtless it is with a view to the purifying and sanctifying nature of a true faith, that our Saviour says, "He that believeth in me hath everlasting life," with many

other expressions to the same purpose. Considered in this light, no wonder it has the power of salvation ascribed to it ! Considered in any other, we must suppose it to operate like an oriental talisman, if it obtains for us the least advantage, which is an affront to him who insists upon our having it, and will on no other terms admit us to his favour. I mention this distinguishing article in his Reflections the rather, because it serves for a solid foundation to the distinction I made, in my last, between the specious professor and the true believer, between him whose faith is his Sunday-suit and him who never puts it off at all, a distinction I am a little fearful sometimes of making, because it is a heavy stroke upon the practice of more than half the Christians in the world.

My dear cousin, I told you I read the book with great pleasure, which may be accounted for from its own merit, but perhaps it pleased me the more because you had travelled the same road before me. You know there is such a pleasure as this, which would want great explanation to some folks,—being perhaps a mystery to those whose hearts are a mere muscle, and serve only for the purposes of an even circulation.

W. C.

XII

THANKFULNESS AND RESIGNATION TO GOD.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Sept 4, 1765

THOUGH I have some very agreeable acquaintance at Huntingdon, my dear cousin, none of their visits are so agreeable as the arrival of your letters. I thank you for that which I have just received from Droxford, and particularly for that part of it where you give me an unlimited liberty upon the subject I have already so often written upon. Whatever interests us deeply as naturally flows into the pen as it does from the lips, when every restraint is taken away, and we meet with a friend indulgent enough to attend to us. How many, in all the variety of characters with whom I am acquainted, could I find after the strictest search, to whom I

could write as I do to you? I hope the number will increase, I am sure it cannot easily be diminished

Poor——! I have heard the whole of his history, and can only lament what I am sure I can make no apology for. Two of my friends have been cut off, during my illness, in the midst of such a life as it is frightful to reflect upon, and here am I, in better health and spirits than I can almost remember to have enjoyed before after having spent months in the apprehension of instant death. How mysterious are the ways of Providence! Why did I receive grace and mercy? Why was I preserved, afflicted for my good, received, as I trust, into favour and blessed with the greatest happiness I can ever know or hope for in this life, while these were overtaken by the great arrest, unawakened, unrepenting, and every way unprepared for it? His infinite wisdom, to whose infinite mercy I owe it all, can solve these questions, and none beside him. If a free-thinker, as many a man miscalls himself, could be brought to give a serious answer to them, he would certainly say—"Without doubt, sir, you was in great danger, you had a narrow escape, a most fortunate one indeed." How excessively foolish, as well as shocking! As if life depended upon luck, and all that we are or can be, all that we have or hope for, could possibly be referred to accident! Yet to this freedom of thought it is owing that He, who, as our Saviour tell us, is thoroughly apprized of the death of the meanest of his creatures, is supposed to leave those whom he has made in his own image, to the mercy of chance, and to this therefore it is likewise owing that the correction which our heavenly Father bestows upon us, that we may be fitted to receive his blessing, is so often disappointed of its benevolent intention, and that men despise the chastening of the Almighty. Fevers and all diseases are accidents, and long life, recovery at least from sickness, is the gift of the physician. No man can be a greater friend to the use of means upon these occasions than myself, for it were presumption and enthusiasm to neglect them. God has endued them with salutary properties on purpose that we might avail ourselves of them, otherwise that part of his creation were in vain. But to impute our recovery to the medicine, and to carry our views no further, is to rob God of

his honour, and is saying in effect that he has parted with the keys of life and death, and, by giving to a drug the power to heal us, has placed our lives out of his own reach. He that thinks thus may as well fall upon his knees at once and return thanks to the medicine that cured him, for it was certainly more immediately instrumental in his recovery than either the apothecary or the doctor. My dear cousin, a firm persuasion of the superintendence of Providence over all our concerns is absolutely necessary to our happiness. Without it, we cannot be said to believe in the Scripture, or practise any thing like resignation to his will. If I am convinced that no affliction can befall me without the permission of God, I am convinced likewise that he sees and knows that I am afflicted, believing this, I must in the same degree believe that, if I pray to him for deliverance, he hears me, I must needs know likewise with equal assurance that, if he hears, he will also deliver me, if that will upon the whole be most conducive to my happiness, and if he does not deliver me, I may be well assured that he has none but the most benevolent intention in declining it. He made us, not because we could add to his happiness, which was always perfect but that we might be happy ourselves, and will he not in all his dispensations towards us, even in the minutest, consult that end for which he made us? To suppose the contrary, is (which we are not always aware of) affronting every one of his attributes, and at the same time the certain consequence of disbelieving his care for us is, that we renounce utterly our dependence upon him. In this view it will appear plainly that the line of duty is not stretched too tight, when we are told that we ought to accept every thing at his hands as a blessing, and to be thankful even while we smart under the rod of iron with which he sometimes rules us. Without this persuasion, every blessing, however we may think ourselves happy in it, loses its greatest recommendation, and every affliction is intolerable. Death itself must be welcome to him who has this faith, and he who has it not must aim at it, if he is not a madman.

You cannot think how glad I am to hear you are going to commence lady and mistress of *Freemantle. I know it well and could go to it from Southampton blindfold. You are

kind to invite me to it, and I shall be so kind to myself as to accept the invitation, though I should not for a slight consideration be prevailed upon to quit my beloved retirement at Huntingdon.

Yours ever, W C.

*Freemantle, a villa near Southampton

XIII.

THE UNWINS—OTHER ACQUAINTANCE AT HUNTINGDON.

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Sept 14, 1765

THE longer I live here, the better I like the place, and the people who belong to it. I am upon very good terms with no less than five families, besides two or three odd scrambling fellows like myself. The last acquaintance I made here is with the race of the Unwins, consisting of father and mother, son and daughter, the most comfortable social folks you ever knew. The son is about twenty-one years of age, one of the most unreserved and amiable young men I ever conversed with. He is not yet arrived at that time of life, when suspicion recommends itself to us in the form of wisdom, and sets every thing but our own dear selves at an immeasurable distance from our esteem and confidence. Consequently he is known almost as soon as seen, and having nothing in his heart that makes it necessary for him to keep it barred and bolted, opens it to the perusal even of a stranger. The father is a clergyman, and the son is designed for orders. The design, however, is quite his own, proceeding merely from his being and having always been sincere in his belief and love of the Gospel. Another acquaintance I have lately made is with a Mr. Nicholson, a North country divine, very poor, but very good, and very happy. He reads prayers here twice a day, all the year round, and travels on foot to serve two churches every Sunday through the year, his journey out and home again being sixteen miles. I supped with him last night. He gave me bread and cheese, and a black jug of ale of his

own brewing, and doubtless brewed by his own hands. Another of my acquaintance is Mr —, a thin, tall, old man, and as good as he is thin. He drinks nothing but water, and eats on flesh, partly (I believe) from a religious scruple (for he is very religious), and partly in the spirit of a valetudinarian. He is to be met with every morning of his life, at about six o'clock at a FOUNTAIN of very fine water, about a mile from the town, which is reckoned extremely like the Bristol spring. Being both early risers, and the only early walkers in the place, we soon became acquainted. His great piety can be equalled by nothing but his great regularity, for he is the most perfect time-piece in the world. I have received a visit likewise from Mr. —. He is very much a gentleman, well read, and sensible. I am persuaded, in short, that if I had the choice of all England, where to fix my abode, I could not have chosen better for myself, and most likely I should not have chosen so well.

You say, you hope it is not necessary for salvation, to undergo the same afflictions that I have undergone. No! my dear cousin. God deals with his children as a merciful father, he does not, as he himself tells us, afflict willingly the sons of men. Doubtless there are many, who, having been placed by his good providence out of the reach of any great evil and the influence of bad example, have from their very infancy been partakers of the grace of his Holy Spirit, in such a manner as never to have allowed themselves in any grievous offence against him. May you love him more and more day by day, as every day, while you think upon him, you will find him more worthy of your love: and may you be finally accepted with him for His sake, whose intercession for all his faithful servants cannot but prevail!

Yours ever,

W. C.

XIV.

GRATITUDE FOR LADY H'S FRIENDSHIP.

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Oct 10, 1765.

I SHOULD grumble at your long silence, if I did not know that one may love one's friends very well, though one

is not always in the humour to write to them. Besides, I have the satisfaction of being perfectly sure that you have at least twenty times recollected the debt you owe me, and as often resolved to pay it, and perhaps while you remain indebted to me, you think of me twice as often as you would do, if the account was clear. These are the reflections with which I comfort myself, under the affliction of not hearing from you; my temper does not incline me to jealousy, and if it did, I should set all right by having recourse to what I have already received from you.

I thank God for your friendship, and for every friend I have, for all the pleasing circumstances of my situation here, for my health of body, and perfect serenity of mind. To recollect the past, and compare it with the present, is all I have need of to fill me with gratitude, and to be grateful is to be happy. Not that I think myself sufficiently thankful, or that I shall ever be so in this life. The warmest heart perhaps only feels by fits, and is often as insensible as the coldest. This, at least, is frequently the case with mine, and oftener than it should be. But the mercy that can forgive iniquity will never be severe to mark our frailties, to that mercy, my dear cousin, I commend you, with earnest wishes for your welfare, and remain your very affectionate.

W C

 XV.

MISS AND MRS UNWIN.

TO LADY HESKETH

Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1766

I wish you joy, my dear cousin, of being safely arrived in port from the storms of Southampton. For my own part, who am but as a Thames wherry, in a world full of tempest and commotion, I know so well the value of the creek I have put into, and the snugness it affords me, that I have a sensible sympathy with you in the pleasure you find in being once more blown to Droxford. I know enough of Miss Morley to send her my compliments; to which, if I had never seen her affection for you, would sufficiently

entitle her If I neglected to do it sooner, it is only because I am naturally apt to neglect what I ought to do ; and if I was as genteel as I am negligent, I should be the most delightful creature in the universe.

I am glad you think so favourably of my Huntingdon acquaintance , they are indeed a nice set of folks, and suit me exactly. I should have been more particular in my account of Miss Unwin, if I had had materials for a minute description She is about eighteen years of age, rather handsome and genteel. In her mother's company she says little , not because her mother requires it of her, but because she seems glad of that excuse for not talking, being somewhat inclined to bashfulness There is the most remarkable cordiality between all the parts of the family ; and the mother and daughter seem to dote upon each other. The first time I went to the house I was introduced to the daughter alone ; and sat with her near half an hour, before her brother came in, who had appointed me to call upon him. Talking is necessary in a *tête-à-tête*, to distinguish the persons of the drama from the chairs they sit on accordingly she talked a great deal, and extremely well ; and, like the rest of the family, behaved with as much ease of address as if we had been old acquaintance. She resembles her mother in her great piety, who is one of the most remarkable instances of it I have ever seen They are altogether the cheerfulest and most engaging family-piece it is possible to conceive.

Since I wrote the above, I met Mrs Unwin in the street, and went home with her She and I walked together near two hours in the garden, and had a conversation which did me more good than I should have received from an audience of the first prince in Europe. That woman is a blessing to me, and I never see her without being the better of her company. I am treated in the family as if I was a near relation. and have been repeatedly invited to call upon them at all times. You know what a shy fellow I am . I cannot prevail with myself to make so much use of this privilege as I am sure they intend I should ; but perhaps this awkwardness will wear off hereafter It was my earnest request before I left St. Alban's that wherever it might please providence

to dispose of me, I might meet with such an acquaintance as I find in Mrs. Unwin. How happy^{*} it is to believe, with a steadfast assurance, that our petitions are heard even while we are making them ; and how delightful to meet with a proof of it in the effectual and actual grant of them ! Surely it is a gracious finishing given to those means, which the Almighty has been pleased to make use of for my conversion. After having been deservedly rendered unfit for any society, to be again qualified for it, and admitted at once into the fellowship of those whom God regards as the excellent of the earth, and whom, in the emphatical language of Scripture, he preserves as the apple of his eye, is a blessing which carries with it the stamp and visible superscription of divine bounty,—a grace unlimited as undeserved, and, like its glorious Author, free in its course, and blessed in its operation !

My dear cousin ! health and happiness, and above all, the favour of our great and gracious Lord, attend you ! While we seek it in spirit and in truth, we are infinitely more secure of it than of the next breath we expect to draw. Heaven and earth have their destined periods, ten thousand worlds will vanish at the consummation of all thing, but the word of God standeth fast, and they who trust in him shall never be confounded.

My love to all who inquire after me

Yours affectionately,

W C.

XVI.

HUNTINGDON, HIS PERFECT CONTENTMENT THERE.

TO MAJOR COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, NEAR HARTFORD,

MY DEAR MAJOR,

Huntingdon, Oct. 18, 1783

I HAVE neither lost the use of my fingers nor my memory, though my unaccountable silence might incline you to suspect that I had lost both. The history of those things which have, from time to time, prevented my scribbling, would not only be inspid but extremely voluminous ; for which reasons they will not make their appearance at present, nor probably

at any time hereafter. If my neglecting to write to you were a proof that I had never thought of you, and that had been really the case, five shillings a piece would have been much too little to give for the sight of such a monster ! But I am no such monster, nor do I perceive in myself the least tendency to such a transformation. You may recollect that I had but very uncomfortable expectations of the accommodation I should meet with at Huntingdon. How much better is it to take our lot, where it shall please Providence to cast it, without anxiety ! Had I chosen for myself, it is impossible I could have fixed upon a place so agreeable to me in all respects. I so much dreaded the thought of having a new acquaintance to make, with no other recommendation than that of being a perfect stranger, that I heartily wished no creature here might take the least notice of me. Instead of which, in about two months after my arrival, I became known to all the virtable people here, and do verily think it the most agreeable neighbourhood I ever saw.

Here are three families who have received me with the utmost civility, and two in particular have treated me with as much cordiality as if their pedigrees and mine had grown upon the same sheep-skin. Besides these, there are three or four single men who suit my temper to a hair. The town is one of the neatest in England, the country is fine, for several miles about it, and the roads, which are all turnpike, and strike out four or five different ways, are perfectly good all the year round. I mention this latter circumstance chiefly because my distance from Cambridge has made a horseman of me at last, or at least is likely to do so. My brother and I meet every week, by an alternate reciprocation of intercourse, as Sam Johnson would express it, sometimes I get a lift in a neighbour's chaise, but generally ride. As to my own personal condition, I am much happier than the day is long, and sunshine and candlelight see me perfectly contented. I get books in abundance, as much company as I choose, deal of *comfortable leisure*, and enjoy better health, I think, than for many years past. What is there wanting to make me happy ? Nothing, if I can but be as thankful as I ought, and I trust that He who has bestowed so many blessings upon me, will give me gratitude to crown them.

all. I beg you will give my love to my dear cousin Maria, and to every body at the Park. If Mrs. Matland, is with you, as I suspect by a passage in Lady Hesketh's letter to me, pray remember me to her very affectionately. And believe me, my dear friend, ever yours. W. C.

XVII.**THE UNWINS—MEN PRONE TO OVERVALUE THEIR OWN CIRCLE.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Oct. 25, 1760.

I AM afraid the month of October has proved rather unfavourable to the *belle assemblée* at Southampton, high winds and continual rains being bitter enemies to that agreeable lounge, which you and I are equally found of. I have very cordially betaken myself to my books, and my fireside; and seldom leave them unless for exercise. I have added another family to the number of those I was acquainted with when you were here. Their name is Unwin—the most agreeable people imaginable, quite sociable, and as free from the ceremonious civility of country gentlefolks as any I ever met with. They treat me more like a near relation than a stranger, and their house is always open to me. The old gentleman carries me to Cambridge in his chaise. He is a man of learning and good sense, and as simple as parson Adams. His wife has a very uncommon understanding, has read much to excellent purpose, and is more polite than a duchess. The son who belongs to Cambridge, is a most amiable young man, and the daughter quite of a piece with the rest of the family. They sec but little company, which suits me exactly, so when I will, I find a house full of peace and cordiality in all its parts, and I am sure to hear no scandal, but such discourse instead of it as we are all better for. You remember Rousseau's description of an English morning; such are the mornings I spend with these good people; and the evenings differ from them in nothing, except that they are still more snug, and quieter. Now I know them,

I wonder that I liked Huntingdon so well before I knew them, and am apt to think I should find every place disagreeable that had not an Unwin belonging to it.

This incident convinces me of the truth of an observation I have often made, that when we circumscribe our estimate of all that is clever within the limits of our own acquaintance (which I at least have been always apt to do), we are guilty of a very uncharitable censure upon the rest of the world, and of a narrowness of thinking disgraceful to ourselves. Wapping and Redriff may contain some of the most amiable persons living, and such as one would go to Wapping and Redriff to make acquaintance with. You remember Mr Gray's stanza—

"Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear ;
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
And waste its sweetness on the desert air."

Yours, dear Joe,

W. C.

XVIII

COWPER ABOUT TO LODGE AND BOARD WITH THE REV. MR. UNWIN.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOE,

Nov. 5, 1765.

I WROTE to you about ten days ago,

Soliciting a quick return of gold,
To purchase certain horse that like me well.

Either my letter or your answer to it, I fear, has miscarried. The former, I hope, because a miscarriage of the latter might be attended with bad consequences.

I find it impossible to proceed any longer in my present course, without danger bankruptcy. I have therefore entered into an agreement with the Rev. Mr Unwin, to lodge and board with him. The family are the most agreeable in the world. They live in a special good house, and in a very genteel way. They are all exactly what I would wish them to be, and I know I shall be as happy with them as I can be on this side of the sun. I did not

dream of this matter till about five days ago, but now the whole is settled I shall transfer myself thither as soon as I have satisfied all demands upon me here

Yours ever,

W C

I know nobody so like Mrs Unwin as my Aunt Madan, I don't mean in person, for she is a much younger woman, but in character.

XIX

DECLINING TO READ LAW-LECTURES AT LYONS' INN.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR SIR,

Nov 8, 1765

NOTWITHSTANDING it is so agreeable a thing to read Law Lectures to the Students of Lyons' Inn, especially to the reader himself, I must beg leave to waive it. Danby Pickering must be the happy man, and I heartily wish him joy of his deputyship. As to the treat, I think if it goes before the lecture, it will be apt to blunt the apprehension of the students and if it comes after, it may erase from their memories impressions so newly made. I could wish, therefore, that for their benefit and behoof, this circumstance were omitted. But if it be absolutely necessary, I hope Mr Salt, or whoever takes the conduct of it, will see that it be managed with the frugality and temperance becoming so learned a body. I shall be obliged to you if you will present my respects to Mr Treasurer Salt, and express my concern at the same time, that he had the trouble of sending me two letters upon this occasion. The first of them never came to hand.

I think the Welshman must *morris*;—what think you? If he withdraws to his native mountains we shall never catch him, so the best way is to let him run in debt no longer.

As to E^c—, if he will listen to anything, it must be to a remonstrance from you. A letter has no more effect upon him than a messenger sent up to a paper kite; and he will make me pay the postage of all my epistles into the bargain.

I shall be obliged to you if you will tell me whether my exchequer is full or empty, and whether the revenue of last year is yet come in, that I may proportion my payments to the exigencies of my affairs.

My dear Sephus, give my love to your family, and believe me much obliged to you for your invitation. At present I am in such an unsettled condition, that I can think of nothing but laying the foundation of my future abode at Unwin's. My being admitted there, is the effect of the great good nature and friendly turn of that family, who I have great reason to believe are as desirous to do me service as they could be after a much longer acquaintance. Let your next, if it comes a week hence, be directed to me there.

The greatest part of the law books are those which Lord Cowper gave me. Those, and the very few which I bought myself, are all at the Major's service.

Stroke puss's back the wrong way and it will put her in mind of her master.

Yours ever,

W. C.

XX.

A LETTER RELATING TO HIS AFFAIRS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS,

Dec. 3, 1765.

THAT I may return as particular an answer to your letter as possible, I will take it *item by item*.

First, then, I rejoice with you in the victory you have obtained over the Welshman's pocket. The reluctance with which he pays, and promises to pay, gives me but little concern, further than as it seems to threaten you with the trouble of many fruitless applications hereafter, in the receipt of my lordship's rents.

Secondly, I am glad that you have received some money on my account, and am still more pleased that you have so much in bank, after the remittances already made. But that which increases my joy to the highest pitch of possible augmentation, is, that you expect to receive more shortly.

Thirdly, I should be quite in raptures with the fair promises of Mr. E—, if I believed he was in earnest. But the propensity of that gentleman to indulge himself in a jocular humour upon these serious occasions, though it is very entertaining, is not quite so good a joke as the performance of those promises would be. But men of wit are apt to be a little whimsical.

Fourthly, I do recollect that I myself am a little guilty of what I blame so much in Mr E— in the last letter I wrote you, having returned you so facetious an answer to your serious enquiry concerning the entertainment to be given or not to be given to the gentlemen of New Inn, that you must needs have been at a loss to collect from it my real intentions. My sincere desire, however, in this respect is, that they may fast, and being supported in this resolution, not only by an assurance that I can, therefore ought to make a better use of my money, but also by the examples of my predecessors in the same business, Mr Barrington and Mr Schutz, I have no longer any doubt concerning the propriety of condemning them to abstinence upon this occasion, and cannot but wish that point may be carried, if it can be done without engaging you in the trouble of my disagreeable haggling and twisting, and wriggling to save my money.

Lastly, if I am not mistaken, I owe Thurlow five guineas. Be so kind as to pay him when he happens to fill in your way.

Yours, my dear Joe,

W. C.

The fire or the general election begins to smoke here already.

1766.

XXI.

**HIS ACCOUNT WITH DR. COTTON—MORE DEBTS
THAN MONEY—NO CURIOSITY CONCERNING
COLMAN'S NEW PLAY.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR SEPHUS,

Huntingdon, March, 10, 1766

I THINK the remainder of Dr Cotton's account is sixty-five pounds. I should have advised the payment of it before

this time, but the time of general payment advances apace, and I have been afraid of wanting money for other purposes. In the pleasant month of May, I intend to discharge a half-year's reckoning with Mrs Unwin. Soon after that I shall have servants' wages to pay, and half-a-year's maintenance of a small youth whom I brought with me by way of pensioner from St Alban's. The whole amount of these three articles will be about sixty pounds. If, *in these circumstances*, and *in this situation*, you think I can afford to quit scores with the little Doctor I shall be obliged to you if you will do it forthwith. You may contrive, when you send him the cash, to ask whether he is fully paid or no, and if not, how much remains due, and unsatisfied. More debts than money has been my distress this many a day, and is likely to continue so.

I have not seen the new play, nor is my curiosity so much agog, as one would have expected. We live much out of the theatrical sphere. My connexion with Colman is probably at an end, and it would give me therefore more pain than pleasure to read his productions. I have seen the Epilogue and think it wonderfully silly. I ask Fanny's pardon, for I recollect it is Garrick's. My love to your family.

Yours, my dear Sephus, WM COWPER

Remember me to my Uncle when you see him

XXII

PEARSALL'S MEDITATIONS—MRS. UNWIN AND HER SON—MARTIN MADAN.

TO MRS. COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, NEAR HARTFORD

MY DEAR COUSIN

I AM much obliged to you for Pearsall's Meditations, especially as it furnishes me with an occasion of writing to you, which is all I have waited for. My friends must excuse me if I write to none but those who lay it fairly in my way to do so. The inference I am apt to draw from their silence is, that they with *me* to be silent too.

I have great reason, my dear cousin, to be thankful to the gracious Providence that conducted me to this place. The lady in whose house I live is so excellent a person, and regards me with a friendship so truly Christian, that I could almost fancy my own mother restored to life again, to compensate to me for all the friends I have lost, and all my connexions broken. She has a son at Cambridge in all respects worthy of such a mother, the most amiable young man I ever knew. His natural and acquired endowments are very considerable, and as to his virtues, I need only say, that he is a Christian. It ought to be a matter of daily thanks-giving to me, that I am admitted into the society of such persons, and I pray God to make me, and keep me, worthy of them.

Your brother Martin has been very kind to me, having written to me twice in a style which, though it was once irksome to me, to say the least, I now know how to value. I pray God to forgive me the many light things I have both said and thought of him and his labours. Hereafter I shall consider him as a burning and a shining light, and as one of those "who having turned many to righteousness, shall shine hereafter as the stars for ever and ever."

So much for the state of my heart, as to my spirits, I am cheerful and happy, and having peace with God have peace within myself. For the continuance of this blessing I trust to Him who gives it: and they who trust in Him shall never be confounded.

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

Huntingdon, at the Rev Mr Unwin's,
March 12, 1766

XXIII.

LETTERS A FRUIT OF FRIENDSHIP—HIS FORMER AND PRESENT RELIGIOUS STATE.

TO MRS COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, HARTFORD.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

April 4, 1766.

I AGREE with you that letters are not essential to friendship: but they seem to be a natural fruit of it, when they

are the only intercourse that can be had. And a friendship producing no sensible effects is so like indifference, that the appearance may easily deceive even an acute discernor. I retract however all that I said in my last upon this subject, having reason to suspect that it proceeded from a principle which I would discourage in myself upon all occasions, even a pride that felt itself hurt upon a mere suspicion of neglect. I have so much cause for humility, and so much need of it too, and every little sneaking resentment is such an enemy to it, that I hope I shall never give quarter to any thing that appears in the shape or sullenness, or self-consequence hereafter. Alas! if my best Friend, who laid down His life for me, were to remember all the instances in which I have neglected Him, and to plead them against me in judgment, where should I hide my guilty head in the day of recompense? I will pray therefore for blessings upon my friends even though they cease to be so, and upon my enemies though they continue such. The deceitfulness of the natural heart is inconceivable. I know well that I passed upon my friends for a person at least religiously inclined, if not actually religious; and what is more wonderful, I thought myself a Christian, when I had no faith in Christ, when I saw no beauty in him that I should desire him, in short when I had neither faith nor love, nor any Christian grace whatever, but a thousand seeds of rebellion instead, evermore springing up in enmity against him. But blessed be God, even the God who is become my salvation, the hail of affliction, and rebuke for sin has swept away the refuge of lies. It pleased the Almighty in great mercy to set all my misdeeds before me. At length, the storm being past, a quiet and peaceful serenity of soul succeeded, such as ever attends the gift of lively faith in the all-sufficient atonement, and the sweet sense of mercy and pardon purchased by the blood of Christ. Thus did He break me and bind me up, thus did he wound me, and his hands made me whole. My dear cousin, I make no apology for entertaining you with the history of my conversion, because I know you to be a Christian in the sterling import of the appellation. This is, however, but a very summary account of the matter, neither

would a letter contain the astonishing particulars of it. If we ever meet again in this world, I will relate them to you by word of mouth, if not, they will serve for the subject of a conference in the next, where I doubt not I shall remember and record them with a gratitude better suited to the subject

Yours, my dear cousin, affectionately, W. C.

XXIV.

WHETHER DEPARTED SPIRITS KNOW EACH OTHER.

TO MRS COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, HARTFORD.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

April 17, 1766.

As in matters unattainable by reason, and unrevealed in the Scripture, it is impossible to argue at all, so, in matters concerning which reason can only give a probable guess, and the Scripture has made no explicit discovery, it is though not impossible to argue at all, yet impossible to argue to any certain conclusion. This seems to me to be the very case with the point in question reason is able to form many plausible conjectures concerning the possibility of our knowing each other in a future state, and the Scripture has, here and there, favoured us with an expression that looks at least like a slight intimation of it, but because a conjecture can never amount to a proof, and a slight intimation cannot be construed into a positive assertion, therefore I think we can never come to any absolute conclusion upon the subject. We may indeed reason about plausibility of our conjectures, and we may discuss, with great industry and shrewdness of argument, those passages in the Scripture which seem to favour the opinion, but still, no certain means having been afforded us, no certain end can be attained, and after all that can be said, it will still be doubtful whether we shall know each other or not.

As to arguments founded upon human reason only, it would be easy to muster up a much greater number on the affirmative side of the question, than it would be worth my while to write or yours to read. Let us see, therefore, what the Scripture says, or seems to say, towards the proof of it

and of this kind of argument also I shall insert but a few of those which seem to me to be the fairest and clearest for the purpose. For after all, a disputant on either side of this question is in danger of that censure of our blessed Lord's, "Ye do err, not knowing the Scripture, nor the power of God."

As to parables, I know it has been said, in the dispute concerning the intermediate state, that they are not argumentative, but this having been controverted by very wise and good men, and the parable of Dives and Lazarus having been used by such to prove an intermediate state, I see not why it may not be as fairly used for the proof of any other matter which it seems fairly to imply. In this parable we see that Dives is represented as knowing Lazarus and Abraham as knowing them both, and the discourse between them is entirely concerning their respective characters and circumstances upon earth. Here, therefore, our Saviour seems to countenance the notion of a mutual knowledge and recollection, and if a soul that has perished shall know the soul that is saved, surely the heirs of salvation shall know and re-collect each other.

In the first epistle to the Thessalonians, the second chapter, and nineteenth verse, St Paul says, "What is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy"

As to the hope which the Apostle has formed concerning them, he himself refers the accomplishment of it to the coming of Christ, meaning that then he should receive the recompense of his labours in their behalf, his joy and glory he refers likewise to the same period, both which would result from the sight of such numbers redeemed by the blessing of God upon his ministration, when he should present them before the great Judge, and say, in the words of a greater than himself, "Lo! I, and the children whom thou hast given me." This seems to imply that the Apostle should know the converts, and the converts the Apostle, at least at the Day of Judgment, and if then, why not afterwards?

See also the fourth chapter of that epistle, verses 13, 14, 16, which I have not room to transcribe. Here the Apostle

comforts them under their affliction for their deceased brethren, exhorting them "not to sorrow as without hope," and what is the hope by which he teaches them to support their spirits? Even this, "that them which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him" In other words, and by a fair paraphrase surely, telling them they are only taken from them for a season, and that they should receive them at their resurrection

If you can take off the force of these texts, my dear cousin you will go a great way towards shaking my opinion; if not, I think they must go a great way towards shaking yours.

The reason why I did not send you my opinion of Pearsall was, because I had not then read him, I have read him since, and like him much, especially the latter part of him; but you have whetted my curiosity to see the last letter by tearing it out, unless you can give me a good reason why I should not see it, I shall inquire for the book the first time I go to Cambridge. Perhaps I may be partial to Hervey for the sake of his other writings, but I cannot give Pearsall the preference to him, for I think him one of the most scriptural writers in the world

Yours,

W C

 XXV.

WHETHER THEY RECOLLECT THEIR CONDITION ON EARTH.

TO MRS COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, HARTFORD

MY DEAR COUSIN,

April 18, 1766

HAVING gone as far as I thought needful to justify the opinion of our meeting and knowing each other hereafter, I find, upon reflection, that I have done but half my business, and that one of the questions you proposed remains entirely unconsidered, viz "Whether the things of our present state will not be of too low and mean a nature to engage our thoughts, or make a part of our communications in heaven."

The common and ordinary occurrences of life, no doubt, and even the ties of kindred, and of all temporal interests,

will be entirely discarded from amongst that happy society ; and possibly even the remembrance of them done away. But it does not therefore follow that our spiritual concerns, even in this life, will be forgotten , neither do I think that they can ever appear trifling to us in any the most distant period of eternity God, as you say in reference to the Scripture, will be all in all. But does not that expression mean that, being admitted to so near an approach to our heavenly Father and Redeemer, our whole nature, the soul and all its faculties, will be employed in praising and adoring him ? Doubtless, however, this will be the case , and if so, will it not furnish out a glorious theme of thanksgiving, to recollect ' the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged ' ? to recollect the time when our faith, which under the tuition and nurture of the Holy Spirit has produced such a plentiful harvest of immortal bliss, was as a grain of mustard seed, small in itself, promising but little fruit, and producing less ? to recollect the various attempts that were made upon it, by the World, the Flesh, and the Devil, and its various triumphs over all, by the assistance of God, through our Lord Jesus Christ ? At present, whatever our convictions may be of the sinfulness and corruption of our nature, we can make but a very imperfect estimate either of our weakness or our guilt. Then, no doubt, we shall understand the full value of the wonderful salvation wrought out for us and it seems reasonable to suppose, that, in order to form a just idea of our redemption, we shall be able to form a just one of the danger we have escaped , when we know how weak and frail we were, surely we shall be more able to render due praise and honour to His strength who fought for us , when we know completely the hatefulness of sin in the sight of God, and how deeply we were tainted by it, we shall know how to value the blood by which we were cleansed as we ought. The twenty-four elders, in the fifth of the Revelations, give glory to God for their redemption out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation This surely implies a retrospect to their respective conditions upon earth, and that each remembered out of what particular kindred and nation he had been redeemed , and if so, then surely the

minutest circumstance of their redemption did not escape their memory. They who triumph over the Beast, in the fifteenth chapter, sing the song of Moses, the servant of God, and what was that song? A sublime record of Israel's deliverance and the destruction of her enemies in the Red Sea, typical no doubt of the song which the redeemed in Sion shall sing to celebrate their own salvation, and the defeat of their spiritual enemies. This again, implies a recollection of the dangers they had before encountered, and the supplies of strength and ardour they had in every emergency received from the great deliverer out of all. These quotations do not indeed prove that their warfare upon earth includes a part of their converse with each other, but they prove that it is a theme not unworthy to be heard even before the throne of God, and therefore it cannot be unfit for reciprocal communication.

But you doubt whether there is *any* communication between the blessed at all, neither do I recollect any Scripture that proves it, or that bears any relation to the subject. But reason seems to require it so peremptorily, that a society without social intercourse seems to be a solecism, and a contradiction in terms, and the inhabitants of those regions are called, you know, in Scripture, an innumerable *company*, and an *assembly*, which seems to convey the idea of society as clearly as the world itself. Human testimony weighs but little in matters of this sort, but let it have all the weight it can. I know no greater names in divinity than Watts and Doddridge, they were both of this opinion, and I send you the words of the latter —

"Our *companions in glory* may probably assist us by their wise and good observations, when we come to make the *Providence of God*, here upon earth, under the guidance and direction of our Lord Jesus Christ, the *subject of our mutual converse*."

Thus, my dear cousin, I have spread out my reasons before you for an opinion which, whether admitted or denied, affects not the state or interest of our soul. May our Creator Redeemer, and Sanctifier, conduct us into his own Jerusalem, where there shall be no night, neither any darkness at all; where we shall be free even from innocent

error, and perfect in the light of the knowledge of God in the face of Jesus Christ

Yours faithfully,

W C.

XXVI.

PRESSED FOR MONEY.

TO MR JOSEPH HILL,

AT THE CHANCERY OFFICE, LONDON, OR IN COOKE'S COURT, CARR
STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

If not at either of the above places, to be forwarded to him immediately.

DEAR SEPHUS,

Aug. 16, 1766.

UNCERTAIN whether or no this will ever reach your hands, I shall lay an embargo upon all that wit and humour which generally pours itself out in my epistles, and only write the needful

I have a bill to pay here, and immediate occasion for cash besides. Twenty pounds will answer both these emergencies. I should be glad, therefore, if my finances will stretch so far, of a bank note by the first opportunity to that amount

I am much concerned to hear of Ashley's illness You will oblige me by sending me some account of him.

Yours, dear Joe,

WM COWPER

XXVII.

INCREASING EMBARRASMENTS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR SEPHUS.

No date.

I SENT you a scrap this morning, but the post not being yet gone out, I shall trouble you with another scrap, upon the subject of yours which I have just received,

I am sorry my finances are not only exhausted, but overdrawn. This being the case I shall choose to let the draper's bill at this place remain unpaid a while longer, till cash comes in. I shall lower my demands therefore, and,

instead of twenty pounds, must beg of you, to convey to me five guineas for immediate use My brother is gone into the North, with no more money than he wants, and will return I suppose, wanting more than he has I thought he had made out our account with Eamonsen, for I charged him by letter, just before he set out for London, not to forget it

These deficiencies of money frighten me, lest I should not be able to continue in this comfortable retreat, for shall never, I doubt, find such another. Another half year will be due to Mr Unwin in November, which must be paid him at the time, if I sell the only hundred I have for the purpose. I was always good at selling. It has, as you say, been an expensive year. I shall hope better things of the next.

I rejoice with you in the snugness of your situation, and if you continue to like it, wish you may always continue to be in the same or just such another.

My love attends your family

Yours, dear Joe.

W. H. COWPER

XXVIII

NECESSITY OF THIS BELIEF TO HIS OWN COMFORT - HIS CONSTITUTION SHAKEN.

TO MRS COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, HARTFORD
MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Sept 3, 1766

It is reckoned, you know, a great achievement to silence an opponent in disputation, and your silence was of so long a continuance, that I might well begin to please myself with the apprehension of having accomplished so arduous a matter. To be serious, however, I am not sorry that what I have said concerning our knowledge of each other in a future state, has a little inclined you to the affirmative. For though the redeemed of the Lord shall be sure of being as happy in that state as infinite power, employed by infinite goodness, can make them, and therefore it may seem immaterial whether we shall, or shall not recollect each other hereafter, yet our present happiness at

least is a little interested in the question. A parent, a friend, a wife, must needs, I think, feel a little heartache at the thought of an eternal separation from the objects of her regard; and not to know them, when she meets them in another life, or never to meet them at all, amounts, though not altogether, yet nearly to the same thing. Remember them I think she needs must. To hear that they are happy will indeed be no small addition to her own felicity, but to see them so, will surely be a greater. Thus at least it appears to our present human apprehension; consequently, therefore, to think that when we leave them, we lose them for ever, that we must remain eternally ignorant whether they, that were flesh of our flesh, and bone of our bone, partake with us of celestial glory, or are disinherited of their heavenly portion, must shed a dismal gloom over all our present connexions. For my own part, this life is such a momentary thing, and all its interests have so shrunk in my estimation, since by the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ I became attentive to the things of another, that, like a worm in the bud of all my friendships and affections, this very thought would eat out the heart of them all, had I a thousand, and were their date to terminate with this life, I think I should have no inclination to cultivate and improve such a fugitive business. Yet friendship is necessary to our happiness here, and built upon Christian principles, upon which only it can stand, is a thing even of religious sanction,—for what is that love which the Holy Spirit, speaking by St John, so much inculcates, but friendship? the only love which deserves the name; a love which can toil, and watch, and deny itself, and go to death for its brother. Worldly friendships are a poor weed compared with this, and even this union of spirit in the bond of peace would suffer, in my mind at least, could I think it were only coeval with our earthly mansions. It may possibly argue great weakness in me, in this instance, to stand so much in need of future hopes to support me in the discharge of present duty. But so it is.—I am far, I know, very far from being perfect in Christian love, or any other divine attainment, and am therefore unwilling to forego whatever may help me in my progress.

You are so kind as to inquire after my health, for which reason I must tell you, what otherwise would not be worth mentioning, that I have lately been just enough indisposed to convince me that not only human life in general, but mine in particular, hangs by a slender thread. I am stout enough in appearance, yet a little illness demolishes me. I have had a severe shake, and the building is not so firm as it was. But I bless God for it with all my heart. If the inner man be but strengthened day by day, as, I hope, under the renewing influences of the Holy Ghost it will be, no matter how soon the outward is dissolved. He who has in a manner raised me from the dead, in a literal sense, has given me the grace, I trust, to be ready at the shortest notice to surrender up to him that life which I have twice received from him. Whether I live or die, I desire it may be to His glory, and it must be to my happiness. I thank God that I have those amongst my kindred to whom I can write without reserve my sentiments upon this subject, as I do to you. A letter upon any other subject is more insipid to me than ever my task was when a schoolboy, and I say not this in vain glory, God forbid! but to show you what the Almighty, whose name I am unworthy to mention, has done for me, the chief of sinners. Once he was a terror to me, and his service, on what a weariness it was! Now I can say I love him, and his holy name, and I am never so happy as when I speak of his mercies to me.

Your's, dear cousin, W. C.

XXIX

**DIRECTING THAT STOCK MAY BE SOLD TO DIS-
CHARGE HIS ARREARS TO HILL—HIS
BROTHER'S CARELESSNESS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOE, *

Oct. 8, 1766.

It would be rather an unreasonable proceeding methinks, to trouble you so frequently as I do with my paltry affairs, and by way of recompense to make use of your money without remembering to restore it. That I may act there-

fore more in character as a reasonable being, I desire you will be so kind as to send me a letter of attorney to empower you to sell as much of the hundred pounds as my arrears with you amount to. Mr Unwin's forty guineas will be due on the eleventh of November. If my treasury has been sufficiently replenished to answer that demand, or is likely to be so before the time mentioned, well and good. If not, I must beg you to despatch the whole hundred pounds, that the money may be forthcoming. My draper's bill, amounting to about fourteen pounds, I shall endeavour to discharge out of my right breeches pocket, which I hope will be rich enough for the purpose.

My brother is returned from Yorkshire, and will send you a copy of our account with Eamonsen. He thought he had given you one when he saw you in town, having written it out for that purpose, but certainly forgot it, as he did his great coat, which he has left at an inn upon the north road, besides having with the same noble contempt of wealth and self-interest, accepted half a moidore from an innkeeper, made of tin, and not worth a penny. I laugh at his carelessness, and so does he. Whether laughing at it be the way to cure it, time will show.

I direct this to your office lest it should not find you at Taplow. My love to your family, and believe me ever yours,

WM COWPER

XXX

MANNER OF LIFE WITH THE UNWINS—REASONS FOR NOT TAKING ORDERS.

TO MRS COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, HARTFORD.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, Oct. 20, 1766.

I am very sorry for poor Charles's illness, and hope you will soon have cause to thank God for his complete recovery. We have an epidemical fever in this country likewise, which leaves behind it a continual sighing, almost to suffocation, not that I have seen any instance of it, for, blessed be God! our family have hitherto escaped it, but such was the account I heard of it this morning.

I am obliged to you for the interest you take in my welfare, and for your inquiring so particularly after the manner in which my time passes here. As to amusements, I mean what the world calls such, we have none, the place indeed swarms with them, and cards and dancing are the professed business of almost all the *gentle* inhabitants of Huntingdon. We refuse to take part in them, or to be accessories to this way of murdering our time, and by so doing have acquired the name of Methodists. Having told you how we *do not* spend our time, I will next say how we do. We breakfast commonly between eight and nine, till eleven, we read either the Scripture, or the sermons of some faithful preacher of those holy mysteries; at eleven we attend divine service, which is performed here twice every day, and from twelve to three we separate and amuse ourselves as we please. During that interval I either read in my own apartment, or walk, or ride, or work in the garden. We seldom sit an hour after dinner, but if the weather permits adjourn to the garden, where with Mrs. Unwin and her son I have generally the pleasure of religious conversation till tea-time. If it rains, or is too windy for walking, we either converse within doors, or sing some hymns of Martin's collection, and by the help of Mrs. Unwin's harpsichord make up a tolerable concert, in which our hearts, I hope, are the best and most musical performers. After tea we sally forth to walk in good earnest. Mrs. Unwin is a good walker, and we have generally travelled about four miles before we see home again. When the days are short, we make this excursion in the former part of the day, between church-time and dinner. At night we read and converse, as before, till supper, and commonly finish the evening either with hymns or a sermon; and last of all the family are called to prayers. I need not tell *you*, that such a life as this is consistent with the utmost cheerfulness, accordingly we are all happy, and dwell together in unity as brethren. Mrs. Unwin has almost a maternal affection for me, and I have something very like a filial one for her, and her son and I are brothers. Blessed be the God of our salvation for such companions, and for such a life, above all, for a heart to like it.

I have had many anxious thoughts about taking orders, and I believe every new convert is apt to think himself called upon for that purpose, but it has pleased God, by means which there is no need to particularize, to give me full satisfaction as to the propriety of declining it, indeed, they who have the least idea of what I have suffered from the dread of public exhibitions, will readily excuse my never attempting them hereafter. In the meantime, if it please the Almighty, I may be an instrument of turning many to the truth in a private way, and I hope that my endeavours in this way have not been entirely unsuccessful. Had I the zeal of Moses, I should want an Aaron to be my spokesman

Yours ever, my dear cousin, W C.

XXXI

**STILL OF OPINION THAT THE STOCK MUST
BE SOLD.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR NEPHEW,

Oct. 27, 1766

IF every dealer and chapman was connected with creditors like you, the poor commissioners of bankrupts would be ruined. I can only wonder at you, considering my knack at running in debt, and my slender ability to pay. After all, I am afraid that the poor stock must suffer. When I wrote my last, the payment of my boy's board was farther distant, therefore I suppose it was that I did not mention it. Mr Peacock's bill too being a growing evil, though at that time I thought of paying it out of my pocket, must I find receive its satisfaction from another quarter. The former of these demands amounts to about six pounds, and the latter about sixteen, and has waited so long for payment that in a little time my credit and interest in that gentleman will begin to totter. My finances will never be able to satisfy these craving necessities, without leaving my debt to you entirely unsatisfied. And though I know you are sincere in what you say, and as willing to wait for your money as heart can wish, yet *quære*, whether the next half year, which will bring its expenses

with it, will be more propitious to you than the present ? The succeeding half years may bear a close resemblance to their insolvent predecessors continually , and unless we break bank some time or other, your proposal of payment may be always what it is at present What matters it, therefore, to relieve the stock, which must come to execution at last ?

I am heartily glad my uncle * has recovered his spirits ; and desire you will remember me to all your associates at Taplow I sympathise with you upon the fugitive nature of the longest vacation, and wish, for your sake, that the chancellor would pack up his great seal, and hold his court in your neighbourhood Yours ever, W C,

XXXII.

**ACCOUNT OF THE BOY HE BROUGHT FROM ST.
ALBAN'S—HIS VIEWS CONCERNING HIM.**

•
DEAR SEPHUS, TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

Nov. 12, 1766.

I DREW yesterday for Mr Unwin's money, and when I have drawn about six pounds more for the young gentleman's maintenance whose birth and parentage you enquire after, I shall have drawn my last for the present

He is the son of a drunken cobbler at St Alban's who would probably have starved him to death by this time, or have poisoned him with gin, if Providence had not thrown him in my way to rescue him I was glad of an opportunity to show some mercy in a place where I had received so much , and hope God will give a blessing to my endeavours to preserve him. He is a fine boy, of a good temper and understanding , and if the notice that is taken of him by the neighbourhood do not spoil him, will probably turn out well for further particulars enquire of Dr Cotton

At present I have thoughts of dealing with him much after the same manner, when he is a year or two older,

*Ashley Cowper, Esq. •

as with my present servant. He will be about nine years of age when my man leaves me, at which time I think of taking him into my service, for he will be old enough to do all the business for which I shall want him, and of a right age to be taught the trade and mystery of a breeches-maker. This, though not so cheap a way as keeping no servant, will yet be a considerable saving to me, for I shall have but one to maintain instead of two, and in the mean time an advantage will result from it, not to be overlooked, the securing him, I mean, from ill examples and bad company, which, if I turn him quite loose into another family, cannot be so easily done. But after all, my measures in this instance, and in all others, are precarious things, because my income is so. But God will order all for the best.

I am sorry my uncle's disorder still hangs about him. The grief of a wounded spirit is of all the most dreadful. Give my sincere love to your family and all my friends, and believe me dear Joe,

Your's very affectionately, WM COWPER.

1767.

XXXIII

**REJOICING TO FIND HER IN ACCORD WITH HIM—
MARSHALL A FAVOURITE AUTHOR.**

TO MRS. COWPER

MY DEAR COUNSIN,

March 11 1767

To find those whom I love, clearly and strongly persuaded of evangelical truth, gives me a pleasure superior to any that this world can afford me. Judge then, whether your letter, in which the body and substance of a saving faith is so evidently set forth, could meet with a lukewarm reception at my hands, or be entertained with indifference! Would you know the true reason of my long silence? Conscious that my religious principles are generally excepted against, and that the conduct they produce, wherever they are heartily maintained, is still more the object

of disapprobation than those principles themselves ; and remembering that I had made both the one and the other known to you, without having any clear assurance that our faith in Jesus was of the same stamp and character ; I could not help thinking it possible that you might disapprove both my sentiments and practice ; that you might think the one unsupported by Scripture, and the other whimsical and unnecessarily strict and rigorous, and consequently would be rather pleased with the suspension of a correspondence, which a different way of thinking upon so momentous a subject as that we wrote upon, was likely to render tedious and irksome to you.

I have told you the truth from my heart, forgive me these injurious suspicions, and never imagine that I shall hear from you upon this delightful theme without a real joy, or without prayer to God to prosper you in the way of his truth,—his sanctifying and saving truth. The book you mention lies now upon my table. Marshall is an old acquaintance of mine I have both read him and heard him read with pleasure and edification. The doctrines he maintains are, under the influence of the spirit of Christ, the very life of my soul, and the soul of all my happiness : that Jesus is a *present* Saviour from the guilt of sin by his most precious blood, and from the power of it by his Spirit ; that corrupt and wretched in ourselves, in him, and in *him only*, we are complete, that being united to Jesus by a lively faith, we have a solid and eternal interest in his obedience and sufferings, to justify us before the face of our heavenly Father, and that all this inestimable treasure, the earnest of which is in grace, and its consummation in glory, is given, freely *given* to us of God, in short, that he hath opened the kingdom of heaven to *all believers*. These are the truths which, by the grace of God, shall ever be dearer to me than life itself, shall ever be placed next my heart, as the throne whereon the Saviour himself shall sit, to sway all its motions, and reduce that world of iniquity and rebellion to a state of filial and affectionate obedience to the will of the most Holy,

These, my dear cousin, are the truths, to which by nature we are enemies. They debase the sinner, and exalt the

Saviour, to a degree which the pride of our hearts, (till Almighty grace subdues them,) is determined never to allow May the Almighty reveal his Son in our hearts continually more and more, and teach us to increase in love towards him continually, for having *given* us the unspeakable riches of Christ !

Yours faithfully,

W. C.

XXXIV

INTRODUCING MR. UNWIN'S SON—GARDENING— REMARKS ON MARSHALL.

TO MRS COWPER

MY DEAR COUNSIN,

March 14, 1767.

I just add a line by way of postscript to my last, to apprise you of the arrival of a very dear friend of mine at the Park on Friday next, the son of Mr Unwin, whom I have desired to call on you, in his way from London to Huntingdon If you knew him as well as I do, you would love him as much. But I leave the young man to speak for himself, which he is very able to do He is ready possessed of an answer to every question you can possibly ask concerning me, and knows my *whole story* from first to last. I give you this previous notice, because I know you are not fond of strange faces, and because I thought it would in some degree save him the pain of announcing himself

I am become a great florist, and shrub-doctor If the Major can make up a small packet of seeds, that will make a figure in a garden, where we have little else besides jessamine and honey-suckle, such a packet I mean as may be put in one's fob, I will promise to take great care of them as I ought to value natives of the park They must not be such however as require great skill in the management, for at present I have no skill to spare

I think Marshall one of the best writers, and the most spiritual expositor of Scripture, I ever read. I admire the strength of his argument, and the clearness of his reasonings, upon those parts of our most holy religion which are generally least understood, (even by real Christians,) as

masterpieces of the kind. His section upon the union of the soul with Christ is an instance of what I mean, in which he has spoken of a most mysterious truth with admirable perspicuity, and with great good sense, making it all the while subservient to his main purport of proving holiness to be the fruit and effect of faith

I subjoin thus much upon that author, because, though you desired my opinion of him, I remember that in my last I rather left you to find it out by inference, than expressed it as I ought to have done. I never met with a man who understood the plan of salvation better, or was more happy in explaining it.

W. C

XXXV.

CONDEMNNS HIMSELF FOR HIS MOTIVE FOR INTRODUCING HIS FRIEND.

TO MRS. COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, HARTFORD

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, April 3, 1787.

You sent my friend Unwin home to us charmed with your kind reception of him, and with every thing he saw at the Park. Shall I once more give you a peep into my vile and deceitful heart? What motive do you think lay at the bottom of my conduct when I desired him to call upon you? I did not suspect at first that pride and vain glory had any share in it, but quickly after I had recommended the visit to him, I discovered in that fruitful soil the very root of the matter. You know I am a stranger here, all such are suspected characters, unless they bring their credentials with them. To this moment, I believe, it is matter of speculation in the place, whence I came, and to whom I belong.

Though my friend, you may suppose, before I was admitted an inmate here, was satisfied that I was not a mere vagabond, and has since that time received more convincing proofs of my *sponsibility*, yet I could not resist the opportunity of furnishing him with ocular demonstration of it, by introducing him to one of my most splendid connexions; that when he hears me called "*That fellow Cowper*," which has happened heretofore, he may be able

upon unquestionable evidence, to assert my gentlemanhood and relieve me from the weight of that opprobrious appellation. Oh pride! pride! it deceives with the subtlety of a serpent, and seems to walk erect, though it crawls upon the earth. How will it twist and twine itself about, to get from under the Cross, which it is glory of our Christian calling to be able to bear with patience and good will. They who can guess at the heart of a stranger, and you especially, who are of a compassionate temper, will be more ready, perhaps, to excuse me in this instance, than I can be to excuse myself. But in good truth it was abominable pride of heart, indignation, and vanity, and deserves no better name. How should such a creature, be admitted into those pure and sinless mansions, where nothing shall enter that defileth, did not the blood of Christ, applied by the hand of faith, take away the guilt of sin, and leave no spot or stain behind it? Oh what continual need have I of an Almighty, All-sufficient Saviour! I am glad you are acquainted so *particularly* with *all* the circumstances of my story, for I know that your secrecy and discretion may be trusted with any thing. A thread of mercy ran through all the intricate maze of those afflictive providences, so mysterious to myself at the time, and which must ever remain so to all, who will not see what was the great design of them; at the judgment-seat of Christ the whole shall be laid open. How is the rod of iron changed into a sceptre of love!

I thank you for the seeds, I have committed some of each sort to the ground, whence they will soon spring up like so many mementos to remind me of my friends at the Park.

W. C.

XXXVI.

**GLAD THAT A TRUNK OF HIS HAS BEEN FOUND—
HE HAS COMMENCED GARDENER.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JON,

May 14, 1767

I ONLY know that I was once the happy owner of a red-leather trunk, and that my brother, when I first saw him

at Cambridge, upon my enquiring after my papers, &c, told me that in a red-leather trunk they were all safely deposited. The whole contents of it are little worth, and if I never see them more, I shall be but very moderately afflicted by the loss, though I fancy the trunk upon the road will prove to be the very trunk in question.

Together with your letter came a bill from my quondam hosier, in Fleet Street, Mr Reynolds, for the sum of two pounds ten shillings, desiring present payment, cash being scarce. I sent him an order for the money by this day's post. My future expenses in the hosiery way will be small, for Mrs Unwin knits all my stockings, and would knit my hats too, if that were possible.

I imagine my brother will be in town about midsummer, when he will be able to confer with you upon the subject of the inexorable Mr. E——, more to the purpose than I can by letter.

Having commenced gardener, I study the art of pruning, sowing, and planting, and enterprize every thing in that way, from melons down to calibages. I have a large garden to display my abilities in, and, were we twenty miles nearer London, I might turn higgler, and serve your honour with cauliflowers, and brocoli, at the best hand. I shall possibly now and then desire you to call at the seed-shop, in your way to Westminster, though sparingly. Should I do it often, you would begin to think you had a mother-in-law at Berkhamstead.

Yours, dear Joe,

WM COWPER

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XXXVII

ELECTION ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

June 16, 1767

THIS part of the world is not productive of much news, unless the coldness of the weather be so, which is excessive for the season. We expect, or rather experience a warm contest between the candidates for the country the preliminary movements of bribery, threatening, and drunkenness,

being already taken. The Sandwich interest seems to shake, though both parties are very sanguine. Lord Carysfort is supposed to be in great jeopardy, though as yet I imagine, a clear judgment cannot be formed, for a man may have all the noise on his side, and yet lose his election. You know me to be an uninterested person and I am sure I am a very ignorant one in things of this kind. I only wish it was over, for it occasions the most detestable scene of profligacy and riot that can be imagined.

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

XXXVIII

**MR UNWIN'S DEATH—UNCERTAINTY WHERE
TO SETTLE.**

TO MRS COWPER, AT THE PARK HOUSE, HARTFORD

DEAR COUSIN,

Huntingdon, July 13, 1767

THE newspaper has told you the truth. Poor Mr. Unwin being flung from his horse, as he was going to the church on Sunday morning, received a dreadful fracture on the back part of the skull, under which he languished till Thursday evening, and then died. This awful dispensation has left an impression upon our spirits, which will not presently be worn off. He died in a poor cottage, to which he was carried immediately after his fall about a mile from home, and his body could not be brought to his house till the spirit was gone to him who gave it. May it be a lesson to us to watch, since we know not the day nor the hour when our Lord cometh!

The effect of it upon my circumstances will only be a change of the place of my abode. For I shall still, by God's leave, continue with Mrs. Unwin, whose behaviour to me has always been that of a mother to a son. We know not yet where we shall settle, but we trust that the Lord, whom we seek, will go before us, and prepare a rest for us. We have employed our friend Haweis, Dr. Conyers of Helmsley in Yorkshire, and Mr. Newton of Olney, to look out a place for us, but at present are entirely ignorant under which of the three we shall settle, or whether

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

55

under either. I have written to my Aunt Madan, to desire Martin to assist us with his enquiries. It is probable we shall stay here till Michaelmas.

W. C

XXXIX.

THE SAME SUBJECT.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ,

DEAR JOE,

Huntingdon, July 16, 1787

YOUR wishes that the newspapers may have misinformed you are vain Mr. Unwin is dead, and died in the manner there mentioned. At nine o'clock on Sunday morning he was in perfect health, and as likely to live twenty years as either of us ; and before ten was stretched speechless and senseless upon a flock bed, in a poor cottage, where (it being impossible to remove him) he died on Thursday evening—I heard his dying groans, the effect of great agony, for he was a strong man, and much convulsed in his last moments The few short intervals of sense that were indulged him he spent in earnest prayer, and in expressions of a firm trust and confidence in the only Saviour To that strong hold we must all resort at last, if we would have hope in our death , when every other refuge fails, we are glad to fly to the only shelter, to which we can repair to any purpose , and happy is it for us when, the false ground we have chosen for ourselves being broken under us, we find ourselves obliged to have recourse to the rock which can never be shaken. When this is our lot, we receive great and undeserved mercy

Our society will not break up, but we shall settle in some other place , where, is at present uncertain.

Yours,

W C.

XL

**PRESSED IN HIS CIRCUMSTANCES—WISHES ONE
HUNDRED POUNDS STOCK TO BE SOLD, AND
THE SALE KEPT SECRET FROM HIS
FAMILY.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR JOE,

Olney, Sept. 21, 1767

I RETURN you thanks for your information in the law matter and shall be obliged to you for further assurances when you can consult your authorities

Many more thanks are due to you for the tender and friendly manner in which you bring me acquainted with the distress that attends my circumstances I beg, my friend, that you will no longer make any objection to the sale of the hundred pounds I cannot be easy till that is done, my peace of mind is concerned in it Not because I suspect you of the least anxiety about payment, but because I abhor the thought of trespassing upon the goodness of ~~a~~ faithful friend My brother has a letter of attorney already to empower him to receive the interest, but I believe it extends no further Send me one therefore to empower you to sell the principal, and I shall be easy as to any future exigencies I am entirely so My expenses hereafter will be so much reduced in some capital articles, that I have not the least remaining doubt but that the income of my future years will be much more than sufficient for the demands of them I might say something of this sort before, perhaps unadvisedly, and the event proves it to have been so, but now I say it upon good warrant, and cannot be mistaken

I could wish, if it can be so managed, that the sale of the stock might be kept secret from my family, because it would probably alarm their fears upon my account, and possibly once more awaken their resentment But the Lord's will be done, whatever it be If they must know it, you will do me the kindness to assure them from me, that I have taken such order about my circumstances as that there can be no danger of exceeding them hereafter Only I beg to be excused descending to particulars Once more I entreat it as a favour, and shall consider it as a new proof

of your attention to my happiness, that you will consent to the sale of the stock, and take measures for that purpose immediately. It cannot possibly be an inconvenience to me, nor can I possibly in any emergency whatever, make a better use of it

My love to your mother and sisters.

Yours ever, WM. COWPER*.

XLI.

THANKFUL FOR HILL'S COMPLIANCE CONCERN-
ING THE SALE OF STOCK—LAW QUESTION—
INVITATION TO OLNEY.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, Oct. 10, 1787

I AM obliged to you for complying with my request, and shall be glad to have the matter expedited as fast as may be.

One more law question, and I believe the last,—A man holds lands in right of his wife, the rents payable half-yearly, viz at Lady-day, and Michaelmas, dies in July. Are not the rising rents the property of the widow? I mean, the rent of the whole last half-year. You are a better counsellor than I was, but I think you have not such a client in me, as I had in Dick Harcourt. Much good may do you with me!

Neither have I any map to consult, at present, but by what remembrance I have of the situation of this place in the last I saw, it lies at the northernmost point of the county. We are just five miles beyond Newport Pagnell. I am willing to suspect that you make this enquiry with a *view* to an *interview*, when time shall serve. We may

* On the back of this letter Lady Hesketh writes — "This letter actually makes my heart bleed! Oh what must have been the sensations of such a heart as his while writing it! I don't know whether I could be *cruel* enough to wish Lord T. to see this and some others of this parcel. But surely he could not see *such* letters from *such* a friend without a degree of remorse that I could not wish to my greatest enemy."

possibly be settled in our own house in about a month, where so good a friend of mine will be extremely welcome to Mrs. Unwin. We shall have a bed, and a warm fire-side, at your service, if you can come, before next summer, and if not, a parlour that looks the north wind full in the face, where you may be as cool as in the groves of Valombrosa

Yours, my dear Sephus,

Affectionately ever,

WM COWPER

P S. The stock is in the three per cent consols You may send the letter of attorney by the waggon from the George in Smithfield It sets out on Tuesday morning early But upon recollection, it had better come by the post.

XLII

REQUEST OF SECRECY REMOVED.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOE,

Olney, Nov 10, 1767

INCLOSED you have the letter of attorney. I shall be glad if you will find an opportunity of sending me six guineas, in a parcel by the Olney waggon, which sets out from the George in Smithfield early on Tuesday morning, therefore it must be sent to the inn on Monday night

It seems to me, thought it did not occur to me at first, that you may be drawn into circumstances disagreeable to your delicacy by being laid under the restraint of secrecy with respect to the sale of this money. I desire therefore that if any questions are asked about the manner in which my arrears to you have been discharged, you will declare it at once.

* * * * *

Yours sincerely,

WM. COWPER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

59

1768,

XLIII.

A BRIEF LETTER OF BUSINESS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR SEPHUS,

Jan 21, 1768.

THE notes arriv'd safe last night We rejoice that the venison proved good Pray send me word in your next whether Grainger the tailor is dead or alive So much for the needful. You are always busy, and I am just going to be so, which will make brevity and conciseness convenient to us both.

Yours faithfully and truly, WM COWPER.

XI.IV

**WISHING-TO KNOW THE STATE OF HIS FINANCES
—HIS CONCISENESS OWING TO ALMOST A
TOTAL DISUSE OF HIS PEN.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE

May 3, 1768.

I SHALL be oblig'd to you if you will send me a ten pound note by the first opportunity, and at the same time I shall be glad to be inform'd of the state of my finances. The last time I wrote I begged you would be so good as to tell me whether Grainger is to be found above ground or no; if he is, whether he lives where he did, or has changed his dwelling, and if not, where his executors, administrators or assigns, are to be met with You will oblige me too, and so will your little tiny mother, if you will favour me with Mrs Rebecca Cowper's receipt to pickle cabbage My respects wait on her and your sisters, viz your mother, not mine You will ascribe my dryness and conciseness in the epistolary way to almost a total disuse of my pen. My youth and my scribbling vein are gone together, and unless they had been better employed it is fit they should

Yours affectionately, WM. COWPER

XLV.

RENEWED INVITATION—MONEY MATTERS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, May 7, 1768.

THANKS for the receipt and for the note. When you come this way next, I hope your business will not be so impatient. We can show you a beautiful country, though not much celebrated in song, and a fine long town, pretty clean in summer-time and full of poor folks. My love to Mrs. Doe, and thanks for the exercise of her transcribing abilities, not forgetting the rest of your household.

I shall want to draw for eighty pounds next month, and intend to leave the remainder by way of nest egg.

Yours affectionately. WM. COWPER.

XLVI.

NOTHING TO SAY—HAS BEEN TO ST. ALBAN'S.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, June 16, 1768.

I THANK you for so full an answer to so empty an epistle. If Olney furnished any thing for your amusement, you should have it in return, but occurrences here are as scarce as cucumbers at Christmas.

I visited St. Alban's about a fortnight since in person, and I visit it every day in thought. The recollection of what passed there and the consequences that followed it, fill my mind continually, and make the circumstances of a poor transient half-spent life so insipid and unaffecting, that I have no heart to think or write much about them. Whether the nation is worshipping Mr. Wilkes or any other idol, is of little moment to one who hopes and believes that he shall shortly stand in the presence of the great and blessed God. I thank him, that he has given me such a deep impressed persuasion of this awful truth, as a thousand worlds would not purchase from me. It gives a relish to every blessing, and makes every trouble light.

Affectionately yours, W. C.

XIVII.

TO MRS COWPER

MY DEAR COUSIN,

I HAVE not been behind hand in reproaching myself with neglect, but desire to take shame to myself for my unprofitableness in this, as well as in all other respects. I take the next immediate opportunity however of thanking you for yours, and of assuring you that, instead of being surprised at your silence, I rather wonder that you, or any of my friends, have any room left for so careless and negligent a correspondent in your memories. I am obliged to you for the intelligence you send me of my kindred, and rejoice to hear of their welfare. He who settles the bounds of our habitations has at length cast our lot at a great distance from each other, but I do not therefore forget their former kindness to me, or cease to be interested in their well being. You live in the centre of a world I know you do not delight in. Happy are you, my dear friend, in being able to discern the insufficiency of all it can afford to fill and satisfy the desires of an immortal soul. That God who created us for the enjoyment of himself has determined in mercy that it shall fail us here, in order that the blessed result of all our enquiries after happiness in the creature may be a warm pursuit and a close attachment to our true interests, in fellowship and communion with Him, through the name and mediation of a dear Redeemer. I bless his goodness and grace, that I have any reason to hope I am a partaker with you in the desire after better things than are to be found in a world polluted with sin, and therefore devoted to destruction. May He enable us both to consider our present life in its only true light, as an opportunity put into our hands to glorify him amongst men, by a conduct suited to his word and will. I am miserably defective in this holy and blessed art, but I hope there is at the bottom of all my sinful infirmities a sincere desire to live just so long as I may be enabled, in some poor measure, to answer the end of my existence in this respect, and then to obey the summons, and attend him in a world where they who are his servants here shall pay him an un sinful obedience for ever. Your

dear mother, is too good to me, and puts a more charitable construction upon my silence than the fact will warrant. I am not better employed than I should be in corresponding with her. I have that within which hinders me wretchedly in every thing that I ought to do, but is prone to trifle, and let time and every good thing run to waste. I hope however to write to her soon.

My love and best wishes attend Mr Cowper, and all that enquire after me May God be with you, to bless you, and do you good by all his dispensations; don't forget me when you are speaking to our best Friend before his mercy-seat

Yours ever,

W. C

N B *I am not married*

XLVIII

HIS FRIEND'S RELAXATION—MONEY.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOE,

Oct. 20, 1768

By this time, I presume, you are returned to the precincts of the law The latter end of October, I know, generally puts an end to your relaxations, such as reading upon sunshiny banks, and contemplating the clouds, as you lie upon your back

Permit it to be one of the *aliena negotia centum*, which are now beginning to buzz in your ears, to send me a twenty pound note by the first opportunity I beg my affectionate respects to my friends in Cook's Court, and am, dear

Sephus,

Yours sincerely,

WM. COWPER.

1769.

XLIX

HIS BROTHER GONE TO WALES FOR CHANGE OF AIR—A NEAR RELATION UNDER DR. COTTON'S CARE.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Olney, Aug 5, 1768.

The note came safe

My brother left us last Saturday, and is now I suppose refreshing his lungs with the pure air which blows upon the

Welsh mountains ; if indeed his lungs, which have been so long used to the fogs of Alma Mater, can be 'refreshed by the thin atmosphere of Snowdon or Phinlimmon

I find that the vacancy I left at St Alban's is filled up by a near relation May the same Hand which struck off my fetters, deliver her also out of the House of Bondage ; and may she say when she comes forth, what I hope to be able to say from my heart, while I have breath to utter it— It is good for me that I was afflicted

Yours, my dear Joe, with my love to all who
enquire after me, Wm. COWPER.

L

A LETTER OF CONSOLATION.

TO MRS COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, August 31, 1769.

A LETTER from your brother Frederick brought me yesterday the most afflicting intelligence that has reached me these many years I pray to God to comfort you, and to enable you to sustain this heavy stroke with that resignation to his will, which none but himself can give, and which he gives to none but his own children How blessed and happy is your lot, my dear friend, beyond the common lot of the greater part of mankind, that you know what it is to draw near to God in prayer, and are acquainted with a Throne of Grace ! You have resources in the infinite love of a dear Redeemer, which are withheld from millions and the promises of God, which are *yea and amen* in Jesus, are sufficient to answer all your necessities, and to sweeten the bitterest cup which your heavenly Father will ever put into your hand. May he now give you liberty to drink at these wells of salvation, till you are filled with consolation and peace in the midst of trouble ! He has said, When thou passest through the fire I will be with thee, and when through the floods, they shall not overflow thee. You have need of such a word as this, and he knows your need of it, and the time of necessity is the time when he will be sure to appear in behalf of those who trust in him. I bear you

and yours upon my heart before him night and day, for I never expect to hear of distress which shall call upon me with a louder voice to pray for the sufferer. I know the Lord hears me for myself, vile and sinful as I am, and believe and am sure that he will hear me for you also. He is the friend of the widow, and the father of the fatherless, even God in his holy habitation, in all our afflictions he is afflicted, and chastens us in mercy. Surely he will sanctify this dispensation to you, do you great and everlasting good by it, make the world appear like dust and vanity in your sight, as it truly is, and open to your view the glories of a better country, where there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor pain, but God shall wipe away all tears from your eyes for ever. O that comfortable word! I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction so that our very sorrows are evidences of our calling, and he chastens us, because we are his children.

My dear cousin, I commit you to the word of his Grace, and to the comforts of his Holy Spirit. Your life is needful for your family, may God in mercy to them prolong it and may he preserve you from the dangerous effects, which a stroke like this might have upon a frame so tender as yours. I grieve with you, I pray for you, could I do more I would, but God must comfort you.

Yours, in our dear Lord Jesus, W. C.

1770.

LI.

**WISHES HIS CHAMBERS TO BE SOLD, — AND
HIS LAW BOOKS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOSEPH,

Jan 20, 1770

THE newspapers informed me last week that the Society of the Middle Temple were come to a resolution that no more chambers should be sold with a power of assignment, and that this resolution would speedily become a law. If this be the case, it were better that mine were sold immediately, for it will never be worth my while to keep them till they shall want considerable repairs, which they must before many

years are passed, and to sell them after this alteration takes place upon terms so much less valuable than those upon which I bought them, will be to lose half my money, unless the Inn is disposed to make up the difference

I have been in treaty with Col Cowper about the sale of my Law Books, and I desired him to pay the purchase money into your hands. If it is done, I shall be glad to receive it

Yours, dear Joe, affectionately, WM. COWPER

LII

**HIS BROTHER VERY ILL AT CAMBRIDGE—HE
WANTS MONY FOR HIS JOURNEY
THITHER.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOE,

Olney, Feb 10, 1770

I WROTE to you above a fortnight since about my chambers, and, desiring you if I have any money in town to send it. The last post brought me word from Cambridge that my brother is very ill, and it may be absolutely necessary for me to go over to him next week. His disorder is supposed to be owing to an inward decay, the consequence of a violent hemorrhage he had in the autumn. Nothing is so likely to prevent my journey at present, as the want of money to defray the expense of it. I shall be glad of an immediate answer whether I have any money in your hands or not, that if I have none, I may furnish myself with it as I can

Yours, dear Joe, with much affection, WM. COWPER

LIII

**MONEY RECEIVED—HIS BROTHER'S SYMPTOMS—
LAW BOOKS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOSEPH,

Olney, Feb 15, 1770.

I THANK you for the notes which I received yesterday, ten pounds, and fifteen pounds. If there should be the same

deficiency next winter, I shall be obliged to you, if without waiting to hear further from me, you will be so good as to sell my chambers

I had a letter yesterday from a friend of my brother's at Be'net I do not find that there is any immediate occasion for my going over to Cambridge, especially as I have written to desire that my brother will come to Olney. He is not at present in a condition to undertake the journey, but Dr Glynn approves of his coming, and will send him as soon as it shall be expedient. The account that I hear of him is, that he has a great shortness of breath, attended with a troublesome cough, and that within this week, his legs are very much swelled, but when his friend wrote he had had a good night, was pretty cheerful, and upon the whole, not worse than when he wrote before.

I should be glad if my Uncle Ashley would be so good as to get an answer from Col Cowper with respect to the books, that if he does not choose to be the purchaser they may be sold to another, for I imagine tints and cobwebs will not much increase their value.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM COWPER.

LIV

ANNOUNCING HIS BROTHER'S DEATH.

TO MRS MADAN STAFFORD ROW, WESTMINSTER.

DEAR AUNT,

Olney, March 24 1770

You may possibly by this time have heard of the death of my dear brother. I should not have left you to learn it from any but myself, had I had either spirits or opportunity to write sooner. He died on Tuesday last, the 20th. It was not judged proper that I should attend the funeral, I therefore took leave of the melancholy scene as soon as possible, and returned to Olney on Thursday. He has left me to sing of mercy and judgment. Greater sufferings than he underwent are seldom seen, greater mercy than he received, I believe, never. His views of Gospel grace were as clear, and his sense of his interest in Christ as

strong, as if he had been exercised in the Christian walk and warfare many years. This is my consolation, and strong consolation I find it, that he is gone to his Father and my Father, to his God and my God.

He is to be buried at his living, about seven miles from Cambridge, by his own desire, this day, the master and fellows attend the funeral

I shall be obliged to you, my dear aunt, if the next time you write to dear Mrs Cowper, at York, you will be so good as to inform her of this event

I am my, dear aunt,

Yours affectionately in the Lord, WM. COWPER

I.V

**HOPE THAT WHAT HIS BROTHER HAS LEFT MAY
ENABLE HIM TO SUBSIST WITHOUT CONTI-
NUING TO BE CHARGEABLE TO
HIS FRIENDS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOE

Olney, April 21, 1770

You will oblige me by enquiring at the Bank, the next time your business calls you that way, what stock my brother left, and by what means it is to be transferred to me when the next dividend is payable, and whether it will be convenient for you to receive it for me by letter of attorney. You may be sure it will give me great pleasure to find myself now enabled to purchase such an annuity as may enable me to subsist comfortably without being any longer chargeable to my friends. You are the best judge of these matters, and I shall be glad of your advice. I know not what is in the Bank, but should hope there may be as much, as with the sale of my brother's effects at Cambridge, and my own chambers, may enable me to compass this very desirable point. I mention this in confidence

Yours, dear Joe,

With my affectionate remembrances to Mrs. Hill
and your sister, WM COWPER.

LVI

ANNOUNCING HIS BROTHER'S DEATH.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

May 8, 1770

YOUR letter did not reach me till the last post, when I had not time to answer it. I left Cambridge immediately after my brother's death.

I am obliged to you for the particular account you have sent me * * * * *

He to whom I have surrendered myself and all my concerns hath otherwise appointed, and let his will be done. He gives me much which he withholds from others, and if he was pleased to withhold all that makes an outward difference between me and the poor mendicant in the street, it would still become me to say, His Will be done.

It pleased God to cut short my brother's connexions and expectations here, yet not without giving him lively and glorious views of a better happiness than any he could purpose to himself in such a world as this. Notwithstanding his great learning, (for he was one of the chief men in the university in that respect), he was candid and sincere in his inquiries after truth. Though he could not come into my sentiments when I first acquainted him with them, nor in the many conversations which I afterward had with him upon the subject, could he be brought to acquiesce in them as scriptural and true, yet I had no sooner left St Alban's than he began to study with the deepest attention those points in which we differed, and to furnish himself with the best writers upon them. His mind was kept open to conviction for five years, during all which time he laboured in this pursuit with unwearyed diligence, as leisure and opportunity were afforded. Amongst his dying words were these, "Brother, I thought you wrong, yet wanted to believe as you did. I found myself not able to believe, yet always thought I should be one day brought to do so." From the study of books, he was brought upon his death-bed to the study of himself and there learnt to renounce his righteousness, and his own most amiable character, and to submit himself to the righteousness which is of God.

by faith With these views he was desirous of death satisfied of his interest in the blessing purchased by the blood of Christ, he prayed for death with earnestness, felt the approaches of it with joy, and died in peace

Yours, my dear friend, W C

LVII

ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF HIS BROTHER'S
DEATH.

TO MRS COWPER

MY DEAR COUSIN,

Olney, June 7, 1770.

I am obliged to you for sometimes thinking of an unseen friend, and bestowing a letter upon me It gives me pleasure to hear from you, especially to find that our gracious Lord enables you to weather out the storms you meet with, and to cast anchor within the veil

You judge rightly of the manner in which I have been affected by the Lord's late dispensation towards my brother I found in it cause of sorrow, that I had lost so near a relation, and one so deservedly dear to me, and that he left me just when our sentiments upon the most interesting subject became the same, but much more cause of joy, that it pleased God to give me clear and evident proof that he had changed his heart, and adopted him into the number of his children For this I hold myself peculiarly bound to thank Him, because he might have done all that he was pleased to do for him, and yet have afforded him neither strength nor opportunity to declare it I doubt not that he enlightens the understandings, and works a gracious change in the hearts of many in their last moments whose surrounding friends are not made acquainted with it

He told me that from the time he was first ordained he began to be dissatisfied with his religious opinions, and to suspect that there were greater things concealed in the Bible, than were generally believed or allowed to be there From the time when I first visited him after my release from St. Alban's, he began to read upon the subject It was at that time I informed him of the views of divine truth

which I had received in that school of affliction. He laid what I said to heart, and began to furnish himself with the best writers upon the controverted points, whose works he read with great diligence and attention, comparing them all the while with the Scripture. None ever truly and ingenuously sought the truth but they found it. A spirit of earnest inquiry is the gift of God, who never says to any, seek ye my face in vain. Accordingly, about ten days before his death it pleased the Lord to dispel all his doubts, and to reveal in his heart the knowledge of the Saviour, and to give him firm and unshaken peace in the belief of his ability and willingness to save. As to the affair of the fortune-teller, he never mentioned it to me, nor was there any such paper found as you mention. I looked over all his papers before I left the place, and had there been such a one, must have discovered it. I have heard the report from other quarters but no other particulars than that the woman foretold him when he should die. I suppose there may be some truth in the matter, but whatever he might think of it before his knowledge of the truth, and however extraordinary her predictions might really be, I am satisfied that he had then received far other views of the wisdom and majesty of God, than to suppose that he would entrust his secret counsels to a vagrant, who did not mean I suppose to be understood to have received her intelligence from the Fountain of Light, but thought herself sufficiently honoured by any who would give her credit for a secret intercourse of this kind with the Prince of darkness.

Mrs. Unwin is much obliged to you for your kind inquiry after her. She is well, I thank God, as usual, and sends her respects to you. Her son is in the ministry, and has the living of Stock, in Essex. We were last week alarmed with an account of his being dangerously ill; Mrs. Unwin went to see him, and in a few days left him out of danger.

W. C.

LVIII.

EXPRESSION OF HIS GRATITUDE FOR INSTANCES OF FRIENDSHIP.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Sept 25, 1770

I HAVE not done conversing with terrestrial objects, though I should be happy were I able to hold more continual converse with a friend above the skies. He has my heart, but he allows a corner in it for all who show me kindness, and therefore one for you. The storm of sixty-three made a wreck of the friendships I had contracted in the course of many years, yours excepted, which has survived the tempest.

I thank you for your repeated invitation. Singular thanks are due to you for so *singular* an instance of your regard. I could not leave Olney, unless in a case of absolute necessity, without much inconvenience to myself and others.

W C *

LIX.

1771.

MORE VENISON SENT TO HIS FRIEND THAN WAS INTENDED FOR HIM.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOSEPH

Jan 1, 1771

You will receive two parcels of venison, a haunch and a shoulder. The first was intended for you, the other comes to you by mistake. Some hours after the basket was sent to the waggon, we discovered that the shoulder had been packed up instead of the haunch. All imaginable endcavours were made to recover it, but without success, the waggon could not be unloaded again, and it was impossible otherwise to get at it. You may therefore thank a blundering servant for a venison pasty, which if she had minded her business better would have been eaten at Olney,

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER

* The subsequent chasm in the Letters of this Volume was occasioned by a long and severe illness with which the writer was afflicted

I.X
1772.

**ALARMED BY AN ARTICLE IN THE NEWSPAPER,
RELATING TO THE DISAPPEARANCE OF
ONE OF HIS RELATIONS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOE,

Olney, Jan 30, 1772

AN article in the last General Evening, compared with an advertisement in the same paper, has affected me with the deepest concern upon my Uncle Ashley's account. In the present uncertainty of my mind I am left to imagine the worst. It would have been kind in some of my many relations, if they had not left me to learn such melancholy intelligence from the public prints. I shall be obliged to you for such particulars as you can favour me with. They will at least serve to relieve me from the variety of restless conjectures which cannot but employ my mind on such an occasion.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM COWPER

LXI

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 4, 1772

I AM much indebted to you for your goodness in relieving me by the first opportunity from the fears I had upon my Uncle's account. The newspaper led me into the mistake, when the person was described as the Clerk of the House of Lords, without the addition of his proper distinction. But I feel much for Mrs Cowper, and the poor young man, and love him better than he is aware of, though I have not seen him many years, and he was but a child when I saw him last. So sudden a stroke must fall very heavy upon her, but I know her principles to be such as will afford her support under the heaviest that can befall her. The dress, the circumstance of his having no baggage, and the time, all seem to concur in giving us a

good hope that he was the person seen at Dover You will make me happy by sending me the first intelligence you hear of him, for I could hardly be more interested in any case, not immediately my own, than I am in this. I am, with my best respects to Mrs. Hill, and thanks for her kindness,

Yours ever,

WM COWPER

LXII.

ON THE SAME SUBJECT.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 7, 1772

I AM very much obliged to you that in the hurry of so much business, you could yet find time to fulfil your promise, and send me the earliest intelligence of my poor cousin But as Mrs Cowper is so kind as to write to me herself upon the occasion, I will discharge you from any further trouble about it We have seen the dark side of the dispensation, and I yet hope it has a bright one. This I know, that if he reap the same fruit of his sorrows, as thousands have found springing up from the deepest afflictions, he will rejoice in the remembrance of them, as I do and shall do, while I live, in the recollection of mine

Yours, my dear friend,

with my respects to Mrs Hill and all your family,

WM COWPER.

LXIII

**HIS BROTHER'S AFFAIRS—DECLINES HILL'S
INVITATION TO LONDON.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 5, 1772.

You will certainly find the mistake on your side. When on the occasion of my brother's death, you was so good as to make enquiry for me at the Bank, you found seven hundred pounds there. Three hundred and fifty pounds were sold as you say to pay the College three hundred pounds, consequently three hundred and

fifty remain As you had forgot the principal doubtless you have not received the interest for the last two years, I would have it reserved, if you please, for payment of my tailor's bill. You say you expect further remittances on my account, out of these you will be so good as to pay yourself I thank you for the money you sent me by the post, but twenty pounds will not serve my present expences This is the season of the year when my wants are always most importunate I shall be glad therefore if you will sell the old fifty pounds, and remit me the money by the first opportunity.

Believe me, my dear friend, truly sensible of your invitation, though I do not accept it My peace of mind is of so delicate a constitution, that the air of London will not agree with it You have my prayers, the only return I can make you, for your many acts of still-continued friendship.

If you should smile, or even laugh at my conclusion, and I were near enough to see it, I should not be angry, though I should be grieved It is not long since I should have laughed at such a recompense myself But glory be to the name of Jesus, those days are past, and I trust never to return!

I am yours, and Mrs Hill's,
with much sincerity, Wm COWPER

LXIV

STRAITENED IN INCOME BY HIS BROTHER'S DEATH.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 14, 1772

I RECEIVED last night the two notes for thirty pounds, and ten pounds. I will not trouble you at present with my tailor's bill I shall have occasion to employ him in the spring, by which time it is possible there may be enough in my bank to answer his demand, and you may expect to see him about March or April with a draft in his hand I do not design to break into the stock, unless it should be unavoidably necessary But you know well that I have been a considerable loser in point of income by my brother's death, and that the price of every

thing is continually advancing, so that it is become much more difficult to bring the year about now, than when I first left St Alban's I am guilty of no extravagance, or inattention to what is called the main chance, nor would be on any account My situation in life is comfortable, my friends would wish it to be so, nor is there a place in the kingdom where I should enjoy so many advantages as here And yet, as I say, there may possibly arise a necessity of having recourse to the funds, though nothing less than necessity shall compel us to do it In that case I should hope not to be censured, for the reasons above mentioned and in the mean time shall do my best to prevent the necessity of such a measure

Believe me, my dear friend,
affectionately yours. WM. COWPER*.

1776.

LXV.

**THANKS FOR FISH, AND FOR AN INVITATION TO
WARGROVE—DESIRES THAT STOOK
MAY BE SOLD.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

DEAR JOSEPH,

Olney, May 18, 1776.

You have my thanks for the very fine mackerel you sent, and for your kind invitation to Wargrove, I am a little mortified to find that I had not got the start of your gardener as much as I hoped to have done, but let him be upon his guard, or I shall be too numble for him another year.

I want money, not to lend, nor to give, but for my own personal and particular use, and want it so much, that I can't go on without it. You will oblige me if you will give yourself the trouble, to sell fifty pounds and remit me the produce immediately. I beg you will do this without making any sad reflections upon it; for assure yourself, neither you nor I shall ever have any reason to repent the doing it.

Yours affectionately, W C

* There is a gap in the correspondence with Mr. Hill from the date of this letter to May 18, 1776.

LXVI.

FISH—MONEY—HIS GARDEN LATE IN ITS NICER PRODUCTIONS, OWING TO THE SEASON.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

May 28, 1776.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

MORE thanks for more mackerel, and many more for the fifty pounds, which I received yesterday. It gave me the greater pleasure, as it afforded a convincing proof that in your former refusal you were guided by nothing but an attention to my interest.

The winter having swallowed up the spring this year has thrown me so backward in some of my nicer productions, that I shall not be able to send you any melons till late in the season, but if you raise none yourself, they shall wait upon you as soon as they are ripe.

Yours affectionately,

WM COWPER.

LXVII.

COWPER PROPOSES TO TAKE THREE OR FOUR PUPILS, AND REQUESTS HIS FRIEND TO PROCURE SOME FOR HIM.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND

July 6, 1776

As you have an extensive acquaintance, you may possibly be able to serve me in a design I have lately formed, of taking two, three, or four boys, under my tuition, to instruct them in the Greek and Latin languages. I should pursue, with some few exceptions, the Westminster method of instruction, being that which I am best acquainted with myself, and the best upon the whole that I have had an opportunity of observing. They would lodge and board under our roof, and be in all respects accommodated and attended in a manner that would well warrant the demand of an hundred guineas per annum.

You have often wished me an employment, and I know none but this for which I am qualified. If I can engage in it, it will probably be serviceable to me in more respects than one: but as it will afford me some sort of an establish-

ment, at least for a time, it cannot but be desirable to one in my circumstances. If you are acquainted therefore with any person who has a son or sons between eight and ten years of age, for whom he would wish to find a tutor who will not make a property of them, nor neglect any means in his power to inform them thoroughly in what he undertakes to teach, you will oblige me by recommending *me*. Doubtless there are many such, and it is not easy matter to find a family where the two grand points of education, literature and sobriety, would be more closely attended to than in This.

We return you many thanks for the fine turbot you were so kind as to send

Believe me yours, &c,

WM COWPER

LXVIII

MELONS-GIVES UP HIS HOPE OF OBTAINING PUPILS

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug 1, 1776

THE coldness of the past season would be forgotten in the heat of the present, if the effects of it were not still visible in the garden. My melons, which ought to have been eaten or at least eatable by this time, are not yet ripe, and as you are taking your repose at Wargrove, you will agree with me, I imagine, that it would hardly be worth while to trundle them so far. Else, as I flatter myself they will be better flavoured than such as are raised for sale, which are generally flashy, and indebted to the watering pot for their size, I should have been glad to have sent you half my crop.

If it were to rain pupils, perhaps I might catch a tub full, but till it does, the fruitlessness of my enquiries makes me think I must keep my Greek and Latin to myself.

Yours affectionately, WM COWPER.

· LXIX.

**FISH—HIS UNCLE ASHLEY'S HEALTH—OFFER OF
PECUNIARY ASSISTANCE ACCEPTED.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

Nov. 12, 1776.

DEAR FRIEND,

THE very agreeable contents of your last came safe to hand in the shape of two notes for thirty pounds. I am to thank you likewise for a barrel of very good oysters, received about a fortnight ago. One to whom fish is so welcome as it is to me, can have no great occasion to distinguish the sorts. In general, therefore whatever fish, are likely to think a jaunt into the country agreeable, will be sure to find me ready to receive them, butts, plaice, flounder, or any other. If herrings are yet to be had, as they cannot be bought at Olney till they are good for nothing, they will be welcome too. We have seen none this year, except a parcel that Mrs Unwin sent for, and the fishmonger sent stale ones, a trick they are apt to play upon their customers at a distance.

Having suffered so much from nervous fevers myself, I know how to congratulate Ashley upon his recovery. Other distempers only batter the walls, but *they* creep silently into the citadel, and put the garrison to the sword.

You perceive I have not made a squeamish use of your obliging offer. The remembrance of past years, and of the sentiments formerly exchanged in our evening walks, convinces me still that an unreserved acceptance of what is graciously offered is the handsomest way of dealing with one of your character.

Believe me yours,

WM COWPER

The Wellingborough Diligence passes our door every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, and inns at the Cross Keys, St. John's Street, Southfield.

As to the frequency, which you leave to my choice too, you have no need to exceed the number of your former remittances.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

79

LXX.

FISH—DR. MADAN'S PREFERMENT.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOE,

Dec 10, 1776

RECEIVED two notes for twenty-five pounds.

This day fortnight came two dozen herrings, remarkably fine. If you ordered any other fish to follow them they swam another way.

Dr Madan's preferment was in the paper, but I overlooked it, so I know neither the name, nor the value of it. But being a sinecure, and as we say, a very valuable one, it has every requisite to raise the spirits.

Yours affectionately, WM COWPER.

1777.

LXXI

SPICED SALMON—HIS GREENHOUSE.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

DEAR JOSEPH,

Jan. 5, 1777

I AM much obliged to you for a tub of very fine spiced salmon which arrived yesterday. It cost us some debate, and a wager into the bargain, one asserting it to be sturgeon, and the other what it proved to be. But the lady was in the right, as she should be upon all such occasions.

My respects wait upon your family. The cold is excessive, but I have a little greenhouse, which by the help of a little fire, is as blooming and as green as May.

Yours affectionately, WM COWPER

LXXII.

DRAFT ACKNOWLEDGED—EARLY CUCUMBER.

TO JOSEPH HILL ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 30, 1777.

THOUGH you are by this time in Berkshire at least, if not in Warwickshire, I thought it would be best to acknowledge the receipt of the draft upon Child for twenty pounds, by the return of the post.

I sent you two brace of cucumbers by the Diligence on

Friday, that is to say, critically at the time when they were sure to miss you if yours are as forward, you have outstripped all our nobility and squires in this country. Neither the Duke of Bedford nor Lord Sussex have cut yet. But you must not be angry with your gardener, for we have more sunshine in two months at some seasons, than we have had this half-year

Yours ever WM. COWPER.

LXXIII.

BRYDONE'S TRAVELS—GRAY.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April—I fancy the 20th, 1777.

THANKS for a turbot, a lobster, and Captain Brydone 'a gentleman who relates his travels so agreeably, that he deserves always to travel with an agreeable companion. I have been reading Gray's Works, and think him the only poet since Shakespeare entitled to the character of 'sublime. Perhaps you will remember that I once had a different opinion of him. I was prejudiced. He did not belong to our Thursday society, and was an Eton man, which lowered him prodigiously in our esteem. I once thought Swift's letters the best that could be written, but I like Gray's better. His humour, or his wit, or whatever it is to be called, is never ill-natured or offensive, and yet, I think equally poignant with the Dean's.

I am yours affectionately, WM. COWPER

LXXIV

**GRAY—WEST—DEOLINES READING THE ABBE
RAYNAL'S WORK.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 25, 1777

WE differ not much in our opinion of Mr. Gray. When I wrote last, I was in the middle of the book. His later Epistles, I think, are worth little, *as such*, but might be turned to excellent account by a young student of taste and judgment. As to Mr. West's Letters, I think I could easily bring your opinion of them to square with mine. They are

elegant and sensible, but having nothing in them that is characteristic, or that discriminates them from the letters of any other young man of taste and learning. As to the book you mention, I am in doubt whether to read it or not. I should like the philosophical part of it, but the political, which, I suppose, is a detail of intrigues carried on by the Company and their servants, a history of rising and falling nabobs, I should have no appetite to at all. I will not, therefore, give you the trouble of sending it at present.

Yours affectionally,

WM. COWPER.

LXXV

**LORD DARTMOUTH LENDS HIM COOK'S VOYAGE—
HE WANTS BAKER ON THE MICROSCOPE
AND VINCENT BOURNE'S POEMS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 13, 1777

You need not give yourself any further trouble to procure me the South Sea voyages. Lord Dartmouth, who was here about a month since, and was so kind as to pay me two visits, has furnished me with both Cook's and Forester's. 'Tis well for the poor natives of those distant countries that our national expenses cannot be supplied by cargoes of yams and bananas. Curiosity, therefore, being once satisfied, they may possibly be permitted for the future to enjoy their riches of that kind in peace.

If, when you are most at leisure, you can find out Baker upon the Microscope, or Vincent Bourne's Latin Poems, the last edition, and send them, I shall be obliged to you. Either or both, if they can be easily found.

I am yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

LXXVI.

MELONS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 23, 1777.

If a melon in the spring is a rarity, a melon in the beginning of winter perhaps may be so too, especially after

so sharp a frost as we have lately had, and still more if it should happen to be a frost when you eat it. This and the fellow to it grew upon one joint The vine was never watered since it was a seed. We ate part of one of them to-day, and thought it good, the other which is better ripened, we supposed might be even worthy of a place at your table, and have sent it accordingly.

I am obliged to you for three parcels of herrings. The melon is a crimson Cantalupe Believe me,
Affectionately yours, WM COWPER.

The basket contains, besides, Bourne's poems and Baker on the Microscope with thanks.

LXXVII

**ASKING FOR BOOKS, AND APPREHENSIVE OF
BEING TROUBLESOME IN THIS WAY.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct 28, 1777.

As Lord Dartmouth was so kind as to furnish me with Captain Cook's last tour round the globe, and with Mr. Forster's account of the same voyage, I am unwilling to be farther troublesome to him; and as I can venture to take a little liberty with you, which I could not handsomely take with his lordship, I will beg the favour of you, when you can do it conveniently, to send me either Commodore Byron's voyage round the world, or Captain Cook's *first* voyage, or both, if they are both to be had, which as the public curiosity is pretty well satisfied by this time, may possibly be the case. There was an account published by some of the people of the long boat, who parted from Captain Cook upon the coast of Patagonia. Their separation is all that is mentioned in Mr Byron's first publication. If this can be procured I shall be glad of it. And pray do not scruple to tell me if I am too troublesome in pesterer you with these commissions, for I had rather never see the books, than extort from you one single *Pish*.

Yours affectionately, WM. COWPER.

LXXVIII.

COMPOUND THANKS—THE BROALLIA, A NEW FLOWER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 11, 1777

If I begin with thank you, I must end with it too, unless I manage it thus. I am obliged to you, and thank you for the books, for the fish, for the thirty pounds, which I hope I shall be able to negotiate here, and Mrs Hill, for the seeds she is so kind as to send me, is entitled to the same return Besides which, when I return the books, I will enclose with them some seed of the plant called the Broallia, a new flower in this country. A few seeds were given me last year, which have produced a quantity. Gordon I am told sells it two guineas an ounce. We account it the most elegant flower we have seen, and when Lord Dartmouth was here, he did it the honour to think with us. I will send with it directions for the management of it

I am, with compliments to Mrs. Hill

Yours affectionately, Wm. COWPER.

1778.

LXXIX

THANKS TO MRS. HILL—ENQUIRY CONCERNING HIS SUPPLIES, UNDER AN APPREHENSION THAT PART OF THEM MAY HAVE BEEN CUTT OFF.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan. 1, 1778

YOUR last packet was doubly welcome, and Mrs Hill's kindness gives me peculiar pleasure, not as coming from a stranger to me, for I do not account her so, though I never saw her, but as coming from one so nearly connected with yourself I shall take care to acknowledge the receipt of her obliging letter, when I return the books. Assure yourself, in the meantime, that I read as if the librarian was at my elbow, continually jogging it, and growling out, Make haste. But as I read aloud, I shall not have finished

before the end of the week, and will return them by the Diligence next Monday.

I shall be glad if you will let me know whether I am to understand by the sorrow you express, that any part of my former supplies is actually cut off, or whether they are only more tardy in coming in than usual. It is useful even to the rich, to know, as nearly as may be, the exact amount of their income ; but how much more so to a man of my small dimensions. If the former should be the case, I shall have less reason to be surprised, than I have to wonder at the continuance of them so long. Favours are favours indeed, when laid out upon so barren a soil, where the expense of sowing is never accompanied by the smallest hope of return. What pain there is in gratitude, I have often felt ; but the pleasure of requiting an obligation, has always been out of my reach.

Affectionately yours,

WM. COWPER.

LXXX.

**SORROW FOR SIR THOMAS HESKETH'S DEATH—
READING RAYNAL WITH GREAT SATISFACTION
—LANDLADY AT NEWPORT TO BE BUMBLEND
FOR NOT FORWARDING THE FISH.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 11, 1778

POOR Sir Thomas ! I knew that I had a place in his affections, and from his own information, many years ago, a place in his will, but little thought that after the lapse of so many years I should still retain it. His remembrance of me, after so long a season of separation, has done me much honour, and leaves me the more reason to regret his decease.

I am reading the Abbé with great satisfaction, and think him the most intelligent writer upon so extensive a subject I ever met with, in every respect superior to the Abbé in Scotland. Yours affectionately, WM. COWPER.

P S Many thanks for the intended fish.

Sunday morning

Which is just come, and should have been here last night. I shall bumble my landlady at Newport.

LXXXI.

**HIS VOICE WEAK FOR READING—PRAISE OF
THE ABBE RAYNAL.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 7, 1778

I HAVE been in continual fear lest every post should bring a summons for the Abbé Raynal, and am glad that I have finished him before my fears were realized. I have kept him long, but not through neglect or idleness. I read the five volumes to Mrs Unwin, and my voice will seldom serve me with more than an hour's reading at a time. I am indebted to him for much information upon subjects, which, however interesting, are so remote from those with which country folks in general are conversant that had not his works reached me at Olney, I should have been for ever ignorant of them.

I admire him as a philosopher, as a writer, as a man of extraordinary intelligence, and no less extraordinary abilities to digest it. He is a true patriot. But then the world is his country. The frauds and tricks of the cabinet, and the counter, seem to be equally objects of his aversion. And if he had not found that religion too had undergone a mixture of artifice, in his turn, perhaps he would have been a Christian. Yours affectionately, WM COWPER.

LXXXII

**CONGRATULATING HIM ON WHAT THE CHANCELLOR
HAS GIVEN HIM—OPINION OF THURLLOW.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 18, 1778.

I TRULY rejoice that the chancellor has made you such a present, that he has given such an additional lustre to it

by his manner of conferring it, and that all this happened before you went to Wargrove, because it made your retirement there the more agreeable. This is just according to the character of the man. He will give grudgingly, in answer to solicitation, but delights in surprising those he esteems, with his bounty. May you live to receive still further proofs that I am not mistaken in my opinion of him

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

LXXXIII

A LION OF OLNEY—REPORTED REFORMS BY THE LORD CHANCELLOR.

TO THE REV W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 18, 1778

I HURRY you into the midst of things at once, which if it be not much in the epistolary style, is acknowledged however to be very sublime. Mr. Morley, videlicet the grocer, is guilty of much neglect and carelessness, and has lately so much disappointed your mother, that she is at last obliged to leave him, and begs you will send her Mr. Rawlinson's address, that she may transfer her custom to him. She adds moreover, that she was well aware of the unseasonableness of salmon at this time, and did not mean that you should order any to Olney till the spring.

We are indebted to you for your political intelligence, but have it not in our power to pay you in kind. Proceed, however, to give us such information as cannot be learned from the newspaper and when any thing arises at Olney, that is not in the threadbare style of daily occurrences, you shall hear of it in return. Nothing of this sort has happened lately, except that a lion was imported here at the fair, seventy years of age, and was as tame as a goose. Your mother and I saw him embrace his keeper with his paws, and lick his face. Others saw him receive his head in his mouth, and restore it to him again unhurt;—a sight we chose not to be favoured with, but rather advised the honest man to discontinue the practice,—a practice hardly

reconcilable to prudence, unless he had a head to spare. *The beast, however, was a very magnificent one, and much more royal in his appearance than those I have seen in the Tower.*

The paper tells us that the Chancellor is frequently at the Register Office, having conceived a design to shorten the proceedings in his court. If he has indeed such a purpose in view, he is so industrious and so resolute, that he will never let it drop unaccomplished. Perhaps the practitioners will have no reason to regret it, as they may gain in such an event, more by the multiplicity of suits, than they do at present by the length of them.

Your mother joins me in affectionate respects—I should have said in love, to yourself, Mrs Unwin, Miss Shuttleworth, and little John. If you will accept this for a letter, perhaps I may be able to furnish you with more such upon occasion.

Yours, with thanks for your last,

WM. COWPER.

LXXXIV.

DODSLEY'S COLLECTIONS—PINE APPLES.

TO THE REV W. UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec. 3, 1778.

I WAS last night agreeably surprised by the arrival of Mr Dodsley. His own merit is his sufficient recommendation, but his appearance, without having been expected or even thought of, made him still more welcome. You have done a kind thing in sending him, and I wish we could recompense it by a pine-apple for every volume.

I made Mr. Wright's gardener a present of fifty sorts of stove plant seeds. In return, he has presented me with six fruiting pines, which I have put into a bark bed, where they thrive at present as well as I could wish. If they produce good fruit, you will stand some little chance to partake of them. But you must not expect giants, for being transplanted in December will certainly give them a check, and probably diminish their size. He has promised to supply me with still better plants in October, which is the proper season for moving them, and with a

reinforcement every succeeding year Mrs. Hill sent me the seeds, which perhaps could not have been purchased for less than three guineas 'Tis thus we great gardeners establish a beneficial intercourse with each other, and furnish ourselves with valuable things that, therefore, cost us nothing

How did you escape the storm? It did us no damage, except keeping us awake, and giving your mother the headache, and except—what can hardly be called a damage, lifting a long and heavy palisade from the top of our garden wall, and setting it so gently down upon two old hot-beds, that it was not at all broken or impaired

Your mother is well at present, and sends her love, joining with me, at the same time, in affectionate remembrances to all the family

Yours,

WM COWPER.

1779.

LXXXV.

OBLIGATIONS TO HIS FRIENDS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 11, 1779

WHEN you favoured me with the last remittance of twenty pounds, you was so kind as to say I might draw for more, if I had occasion for it The occasion is now come and I shall be obliged to you for a further advance I know I am in your debt, which sits the easier upon me, because I am almost always so Long habit and custom are able to familiarize to us things much more disagreeable than this A debt of this kind, I am, at present at least able to discharge But I owe you upon other accounts what I can never pay, except by continuing.

Affectionately and truly yours,

WM. COWPER.

TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

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LXXXVI
**ENQUIRY CONCERNING THE PRICE OF GLASS—
JONSON'S EDITION OF THE POETS.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 26, 1779

I MUST beg your assistance in a design I have formed to cheat the glazier. Government has laid a tax upon glass, and he has trebled it I want as much as will serve for a large frame, but am unwilling to pay an exorbitant price for it I shall be obliged to you, therefore, if you will enquire at a glass-manufacture's how he sells his Newcastle glass, such as is used for frames and hot-houses. If you will be so good as to send me this information, and at the same time the manufacture's address, I will execute the rest of the business myself, without giving you any farther trouble

I am obliged to you for the Poets, and though I little thought that I was translating so much money out of your pocket into the bookseller's, when I turned Prior's poem into Latin, yet I must needs say that, if you think it worth while to purchase the English Classics at all, you cannot possess yourself of them upon better terms. I have looked into some of the volumes, but not having yet finished the Register have merely looked into them A few things I have met, with, which if they had been burned the moment they were written, it would have been better for the author, and at least as well for his readers There is not much of this, but a little is too much I think it a pity the editor admitted any, the English Muse would have lost no credit by the omission of such trash Some of them again seem very disputable right to a place among the Classics, and I am quite at loss, when I see them in such company, to conjecture what is Dr Jonson's idea or definition of classical merit But if he inserts the poems of some who can hardly be said to deserve such an honour, the purchaser may comfort himself with the hope that he will exclude none that do

Your mother sends her love and affectionate remembrance to all at Stock, from the tallest to the shortest there, in which she is accompanied by yours,

WM. COWPER.

LXXXVII

**RAMSGATE—REASON FOR PREFERRING IT TO
MARGATE—LORD HOLLAND'S NEW RUINS.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July, 1779.

If you please, you may give my service to Mr James Martin, glazier, and tell him that I have furnished myself with glass from Bedford, for half the money.

When I was at Margate, it was an excursion of pleasure to go to see Ramsgate. The pier, I remember, was accounted a most excellent piece of stone-work, and such I found it. By this time, I suppose, it is finished, and surely it is no small advantage, that you have an opportunity of observing how nicely those great stones are put together, as often as you please, without either trouble or expense. But you think Margate more lively. So is a Cheshire cheese full of mites more lively than a sound one, but that very liveliness only proves its rottenness. I remember, too, that Margate, though full of company, was generally filled with such company, as people who were nice in the choice of their company, were rather fearful of keeping company with. The hoy went to London every week, loaded with mackerel and herrings, and returned loaded with company. The cheapness of the conveyance made it equally commodious for dead fish and lively company. So, perhaps, your solitude at Ramsgate may turn out another advantage, at least I should think it one.

There was not, at that time, much to be seen in the Isle of Thurnet, besides the beauty of the country, and the fine prospects of the sea, which are no where surpassed except in the Isle of Wight, or upon some parts of the coast of Hampshire. One sight however, I remember, engaged my curiosity, and I went to see it—a fine piece of ruins, built by the late Lord Holland, at a great expense, which, the day after I saw it, tumbled down to nothing. Perhaps, therefore, it is still a ruin, and if it is, I would advise you by all means to visit it, as it must have been much improved by this fortunate incident. It is hardly possible to put stones together with that air of wild and magnificent

disorder which they are sure to acquire by falling of their own accord

We heartily wish that Mrs. Unwin may receive the utmost benefit of bathing. At the same time we caution *you* against the use of it, however the heat of the weather may seem to recommend it. It is not safe for thin habits, hectically inclined.

I remember,—(the fourth and last thing I mean to remember upon this occasion,) that Sam Cox the counsel, walking by the seaside as if absorbed in deep contemplation, was questioned about what he was musing on. He replied, "I was wondering that such an almost infinite and unwieldy element should produce a *sprat*."

Our love attends your whole party

Yours affectionately,

W. C.

P. S. You are desired to purchase three pounds of sixpenny white worsted, at a shop well recommended for that commodity. The Isle of Thanet is famous for it, beyond any other place in the kingdom.

I.LXXXVIII

SULTREY WEATHER—COWPER'S DANGER FROM THE TIDE AT MARGATE—MR. TWOPENNY.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 17, 1779

We envy you your sea-breezes. In the garden we feel nothing but the reflection of the heat from the walls; and in the parlour, from the opposite houses. I fancy Virgil was so situated when he wrote those two beautiful lines

—*Oh quis me gelida in vallibus Ifoni
Statat, et regenti ramorum protegat umbra?*

The worst of it is, that though the sun-beams strike as forcibly upon my harp-strings as they did upon his, they elicit no such sounds, but rather produce such groans as they are said to have drawn from those on the statue of Memnon.

As you have ventured to make the experiment, your own experience will be your best guide in the article of bathing.

An inference will hardly follow, though one should pull at it with all one's might, from Smollet's case to yours. He was corpulent, muscular, and strong, whereas, if you were either stolen or strayed, such a description of you in an advertisement would hardly direct an enquirer with sufficient accuracy and exactness. But if bathing does not make your headache, or prevent your sleeping at night, I should imagine it could not hurt you

I remember taking a walk upon the strand at Margate, where the cliff is high and perpendicular. At long intervals there are cart-ways, cut through the rock down to the beach, and there is no other way of access to it, or of return from it. I walked near a mile upon the water edge, without observing that the tide was rising fast upon me. When I *did* observe it, it was almost too late. I ran every step back again, and had much ado to save my distance. I mention this as a caution, lest you should happen at any time to be surprised as I was. It would be very unpleasant to be forced to cling, like a cat, to the side of a precipice, and perhaps hardly possible to do it, for four hours without any respite.

It seems a trifle, but it is a real disadvantage to have no better name to pass by than the gentleman you mention. Whether we suppose him settled and promoted in the army, the church, or the law, how uncouth the sound—Captain Twopenny! Bishop Twopenny! Judge Twopenny! The abilities of Lord Mansfield would hardly impart a dignity to such a name. Should he perform deeds worthy of poetical panegyric, how difficult would it be to ennoble the sound of Twopenny!

Muse! place him high upon the lists of Fame,
The wondrous man, and Twopenny his name!

But to be serious, if the French should land in the Isle of Thanet, and Mr Twopenny should fall into their hands, he will have a fair opportunity to frenchify his name, and may call himself Monsieur Deux Sous, which, when he comes to be exchanged by Cartel, will easily resume an English form, and slide naturally into Two Shoes, in my mind a considerable improvement.

Yours affectionately,

W C

LXXXIX

**MR. TWOPENNY—PETITIONS FOR PARLIAMENT-
ARY REFORMS.**

TO THE REV. W UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug 17, 1779

You will not expect line for line, or that I should measure your two last letters by a foot rule, and send you so many feet and so many inches in return. I like very well to write, but then I am fond of gardening too, and can find but little leisure for the pen, except when the weather forbids me to employ myself among my plants. Such is the case this morning, the almost tropical heat of the day has driven me into the house, where, not knowing how to employ myself better, I am doing as you see.

You thought you had said too much about the Doctor, and I feared I had said too much, or with too much freedom, about Mr. Twopenny, though I stood quite clear of any design to undervalue the man, at the same time I made merry with his name. I used it as a plaything, imagining I should hardly find a cheaper.

Respecting the Doctor, you judge exactly as I had judged before I received your last, and so I had told your mother. It would be wrong to court him,—*non est tanti* you held him by the hand while he was sinking, and if upon his first beginning to emerge, he is capable of putting an intended slight upon you, your best course is to suffer it patiently, and to take care that it be the last.

As to your Kentish petitioners, they mean well, but the case is hopeless, and, consequently, the attempt (may I venture to say it?) idle. When Henry the Eighth reformed the church, he had twice as much power as George the Third; both Houses of Parliament were on his side, and the clergy themselves, in convocation, being both ashamed and afraid to do otherwise, concurred heartily in the work, but when the Parliament itself is to be reformed, itself must effect the reformation. And, do you think you have eloquence enough, in all your county, to persuade them to relinquish what they have so earnestly laboured to obtain? Will pensioners, when they have read your harangue, resign their

emoluments; placemen quit their offices; and candidates, for preferment abandon all their blooming hopes, and say, "these gentlemen are in the right, the nation will be ruined we will retire, and be content?" I am afraid not; luxury makes men necessitous, necessity exposes them to corruption; corruption inclines them still more to profusion, and profusion, continually increasing, begets new necessities. These again engender corruption and profligacy of principle, and, as poor Robin says, so the world goes round. The king, in the mean time, is a sorrowful spectator of the scene, but a helpless one. No measure of government can proceed without a majority on its side, a majority cannot be had unless it be bought, then what answer can his majesty possibly return to the petition? If it is conceived in loyal and obedient terms, it is teasing him; if otherwise, insulting. So you see I differ from your neighbours upon the subject.

A longer arm and a stronger hand is requisite to this business. Man never was reformed by man, nor ever can be. Your petition therefore, should be carried elsewhere, or it will be in vain. *Dixi*

We rejoice that you are all safe at Stock again. Your mother is well, and sends her best love. You will be pleased to remember me affectionately to all under your roof, and to believe me. Yours, WM. COWPER.

XC

COMMISSION FOR A GLAZIER'S DIAMOND—TAME PIGEONS—TRIP TO GAYHURST.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

AMICO MIO,

Sept 21, 1779.

BE pleased to buy me a glazier's diamond pencil. I have glazed the two frames designed to receive my pine plants; but I cannot mend the kitchen windows, till by the help of that implement I can reduce the glass to its proper dimensions. If I were a plumber I should be a complete glazier; and possibly the happy time may come, when I shall be seen trudging away to the neighbouring towns with a shelf of glass hanging at my back. If government should impose another tax upon that commodity, I hardly know a business

in which a gentleman might more successfully employ himself. A Chinese, of ten times my fortune, would avail himself of such an opportunity without scruple, and why should not I, who want money as much as any mandarin in China? Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture, "that he had found the Emilius who (he supposed) had subsisted only in his own idea." I would recommend it to you to follow my example. You will presently qualify yourself for the task, and may not only amuse yourself at home, but may even exercise your skill in mending the church windows; which, as it would save money to the parish, would conduce together with your other ministerial accomplishments, to make you extremely popular in the place.

I have eight pair of tame pigeons. When I first enter the garden in a morning, I find them perched upon the wall, waiting for their breakfast, for I feed them always upon the gravel-walk. If your wish should be accomplished, and you should find yourself furnished with the wings of a dove I shall undoubtedly find you amongst them. Only be so good if that should be the case, to announce yourself by some means or other. For I imagine your crop will require something better than tares to fill it.

Your mother and I last week made a trip in a postchaise to Gayhurst, the seat of Mr Wright, about four miles off. He understood that I did not much affect strange faces, and sent over his servant on purpose to inform me that he was going into Leicestershire, and that if I chose to see the gardens, I might gratify myself without danger of seeing the proprietor. I accepted the invitation, and was delighted with all I found there. The situation is happy, the gardens elegantly disposed, the hot-house in the most flourishing state, and the orange trees the most captivating creatures of the kind I ever saw. A man, in short, had need have the talents of Cox or Langford, the auctioneers, to do the whole scene justice.

Our love attends you all.

Yours, W. C.

XCI.

WISHES TO BORROW THE PAMPHLET CALLED
ANTICIPATION—ARION AND FISH.

TO JOSEPH HILL ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 2, 1779.

You begin to count the remaining days of the vacation, not with impatience, but through unwillingness to see the end of it. For the mind of man, at least of most men, is equally busy in anticipating the evil and the good. That word *anticipation* puts me in remembrance of the pamphlet of that name, which, if you purchased, I should be glad to borrow. I have seen only an extract from it in the Review, which made me laugh heartily, and wish to peruse the whole.

The newspaper informs me of the arrival of the Jamaica fleet. I hope it imports some pine-apple plants for me. I have a good frame and a good bed prepared to receive them. I send you annexed a fable, in which the pine-apple makes a figure, and shall be glad if you like the taste of it. Two pair of soles, with shrimps, which arrived last night, demand my acknowledgments. You have heard that when Arion performed upon the harp, the fish followed him. I really have no design to fiddle you out of more fish, but if you should esteem my verses worthy of such a price, though I shall never be so renowned as he was, I shall think myself equally indebted to the muse that helps me,

My affectionate respects attend Mrs Hill. She has put Mr. Wright to the expense of building a new hot-house: the plants produced by the seeds she gave me, having grown so large as to require an apartment by themselves.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

XCII.

ON DR. JONSON'S LIFE OF MILTON.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 31, 1779.

I WROTE my last letter merely to inform you that I had nothing to say, in answer to which you have said nothing.

I admire the propriety of your conduct though I am a loser by it. I will endeavour to say something now, and shall hope for something in return.

I have been well entertained with Johnson's biography, for which I thank you with one exception, and that a swingeing one, I think he has acquitted himself with his usual good sense and sufficiency. His treatment of Milton is unmerciful to the last degree. A pensioner is not likely to spare a republican; and the Doctor, in order, I suppose, to convince his royal patron of the sincerity of his monarchical principles, has belaboured that great poet's character with the most industrious cruelty. As a man, he has hardly left him the shadow of one good quality. Churlishness in his private life, and a rancorous hatred of every thing royal in his public, are the two colours with which he has smeared all the canvass. If he had any virtues, they are not to be found in the Doctor's picture of him, and it is well for Milton, that some sourness in his temper is the only vice with which his memory has been charged, it is evident enough that if his biographer could have discovered more, he would not have spared him. As a poet, he has treated him with severity enough, and has plucked one or two of the most beautiful feathers out of his Muse's wing, and trampled them under his great foot. He has passed sentence of condemnation upon Lycidas, and has taken occasion, from that charming poem, to expose to ridicule, (what is indeed ridiculous enough,) the childish prattlement of pastoral compositions, as if Lycidas was the prototype and pattern of them all. The liveliness of the description, the sweetness of the numbers, the classical spirit of antiquity that prevails in it, go for nothing. I am convinced by the way, that he has no ear for poetical numbers, or that it was stopped by prejudice against the harmony of Milton's. Was there ever any thing so delightful as the music of the *Paradise Lost*. It is like that of a fine organ, has the fullest and the deepest tones of majesty, with all the softness and elegance of the Dorian flute. Variety without end and never equalled, unless perhaps by Virgil. Yet the Doctor has little or nothing to say upon this copious theme, but talks something about the unfitness

of the English language for blank verse, and how apt it is, in the mouth of some readers, to degenerate into declamation. Oh ! I could thresh his old jacket, till I made his pension jingle in his pocket

I could talk a good while longer, but I have no room ;
our love attends you. Yours affectionately, W. C.

XCIII.

ENCLOSING THE VERSES ON THURLOW'S PROMOTION TO SEALS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov. 14, 1779.

YOUR approbation of my last Heliconian present encourages me to send you another I wrote it, indeed, on purpose for you, for my subjects are not always such as I could hope would prove agreeable to you. My mind has always a melancholy cast, and is like some pools I have seen, which, though filled with a black and putrid water, will nevertheless, in a bright day, reflect the sun-beams from their surface

"On the Promotion of Edward Thurlow" &c.

Yours affectionately, WM COWPER

XCIV

SUCCESSION OF HUMAN EVENTS—MR. UNWIN'S DISPOSITION—PARTIOTISM.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec. 2, 1779.

How quick is the succession of human events ! The cares of to-day are seldom the cares of to-morrow, and when we lie down at night, we may safely say to most of our troubles—"Ye have done your worst, and we shall meet no more "

This observation was suggested to me by reading your last letter, which though I have written since I received it, I have never answered When that epistle passed under your pen, you were miserable about your tithes, and your

imagination was hung round with pictures, that terrified you to such a degree, as made even the receipt of money burdensome. But it is all over now You sent away your farmers in good humour, (for you can make people merry whenever you please,) and now you have nothing to do but to chink your purse, and laugh at what is past. Your delicacy makes you groan under that which other men never feel, or feel but slightly A fly, that settles upon the tip of the nose, is troublesome, and this is a comparison adequate to the most that mankind in general are sensible of, upon such tiny occasions But the flies, that pester you, always get between your eyelids, where the annoyance is almost insupportable

I would follow your advice, and endeavour to furnish Lord North with a scheme of supplies for the ensuing year, if the difficulty I find in answering the call of my own emergencies did not make me despair of satisfying those of the nation. I can say but this, if I had ten acres of land in the world, whereas I have not one, and in those ten acres should discover a gold mine, richer than all Mexico and Peru, when I had reserved a few ounces for my own annual supply, I would willingly give the rest to government My ambition would be more gratified by annihilating the national incumbrances, than by going daily down to the bottom of a mine, to wallow in my own emolument This is patriotism, you will allow ; but, alas, this virtue is for the most part in the hands of those who can do no good with it ! He that has but a single handful of it, catches so greedily at the first opportunity of growing rich, that his patriotism drops to the ground, and he grasps the gold instead of it He that never meets with such an opportunity, holds it fast in his clenched fists, and says,—“Oh, how much good I would do, if I could !”

Your mother says—“Pray send my dear love.” There is hardly room to add mine, but you will suppose it.

Yours,

W C

1780.

XCV

**ANECDOTE OF RIGBY AND ALDERMAN BECKFORD
—RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN THOSE TIMES AND
THE AGE OF CHARLES THE FIRST—CONDUCT
OF THE REFORMERS CONDEMNED AS DANGEROUS.**

TO THE REV W. UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb, 13, 1780

THE last of your mother's two reasons for not writing sooner, must serve as an apology for me. Uncertain when you would go to town, I chose to stay till that affair was decided. I am to thank you for your portraits taken from the life in the House of Commons, not forgetting the Chancellor, the Duke of Richmond, and the Bishops' wigs. Mr Burke's mispronunciation of the word *vestigal*, brings to my remembrance a jocular altercation that passed when I was once in the gallery, between Mr Rigby and the late Alderman Beckford. The latter was a very incorrect speaker, and the former, I imagine, not a very accurate scholar. He ventured, however, upon a quotation from Terence, and delivered it thus, *Sine Scelere et Baccho friget Venus*. The Alderman interrupted him, was very severe upon his mistake, and restored Ceres to her place in the sentence. Mr Rigby replied that he was obliged to his worthy friend for teaching him Latin, and would take the first opportunity to return the favour by teaching him English.

You are not alone, I believe, in thinking that you see a striking resemblance between the reign of his present majesty and that of Charles the First. The undue extension of the influence of the crown, the discountenancing and displacing of men obnoxious to the court, though otherwise men of unexceptionable conduct and character, the waste of the public money, and especially the suspicion that obtains of a fixed design in government to favour the cause of Popery, are features common to both faces. Again these causes have begun to produce the same effects now as they did in the reign of that unhappy monarch. It is long since I saw Lord Clarendon's account of it, but unless my memory,

fails me much, I think you will find, (and, indeed, it could hardly be otherwise,) that the leaders of the discontented party, and the several counties in their interest, had a good understanding with each other, and devised means for the communication of intelligence much like our modern committees of correspondence. You ask my opinion of the tendency of such associations. No, I mistake, you do not ask mine, but you give your own, which is exactly according to my own sentiments. Indeed they are explicit enough, and if one was inclined to suppose their intentions peaceable, they have taken care that the supposition shall be groundless. A year ago they expressed their wishes that the people would rise, and their astonishment that they did not. Now, they tell government plainly that the spirit of resistance is gone forth, that the nation is at last roused, that they will fly to arms upon the next provocation and bid them slight the Yorkshire petition at their peril. Sir George Saville's speech reminded me of that line in which is described the opening of the Temple of Janus, a ceremony that obtained as the established prelude to a war,

*Discordia tetra
Bells ferratos postes, portusque refregit*

It seems clear, then, that hostilities are intended as the last resource. As to the time they choose for the purpose, it is, in my mind, the worst they could have chosen. So many gentlemen of the first rank and property in the kingdom, resolutely bent upon their purpose, their design professedly so laudable and their means of compassing it so formidable, would command attention at any time. A quarrel of this kind, even if it proceeded to the last extremity, might possibly be settled without the ruin of the country, while there was peace with the neighbouring kingdoms, but while there is war abroad, such an extensive war as the present, I fear it cannot.

I add to what your mother says about Indian ink,—a few brushes, and a pencil or two, with any thing else that may be considered convenient for the use of a beginner, as far as five shillings. I do not think my talent in the art worth more. She desires me to remind you of your promised

vote and interest for a place in Christ's Hospital, of which, she understands, you are now a governor,—and the parcel may come by the waggon, which it will do if it is sent on a Wednesday to the Windmill in St John Street.

XCVI

POOR OPINION OF HIS OWN LETTERS—OBSERVATION OF SIR JOSHUA REYNOLDS—EPHEMERAL SUBJECTS—MADAM'S THELYPHTHORA.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 27 1790

As you are pleased to desire my letters, I am the more pleased with writing them, though at the same time I must needs testify my surprise that you should think them worth receiving, as I seldom send one that I think favourably of myself. This is not to be understood as an imputation upon your taste of judgment, but as an encomium upon my own modesty and humility, which I desire you to remark well. It is a just observation of Sir Joshua Reynolds, that though men of ordinary talents may be highly satisfied with their own productions, men of true genius never are. Whatever be their subject, they always seem to themselves to fall short of it, even when they seem to others most to excel. And for this reason,—because they have a certain sublime sense of perfection, which other men are strangers to, and which they themselves in their performances are not able to exemplify. Your servant, Sir Joshua! I little thought of seeing you when I began, but as you have popped in you are welcome.

When I wrote last, I was a little inclined to send you a copy of verses entitled the Modern Patriot, but was not quite pleased with a line or two, which I found it difficult to mend, therefore did not. At night I read Mr. Burke's speech in the newspaper, and was so well pleased with his proposals for a reformation, and with the temper in which he made them, that I began to think better of his cause, and burnt my verses. Such is the lot of the man who writes upon the subject of the day; the aspect of affairs changes in an hour or two, and his opinion with it, what

was just and well-deserved satire in the morning, in the evening becomes a libel, the author commences his own judge, and while he condemns with unrelenting severity what he so lately approved, is sorry to find that he has laid his leaf-gold upon touchwood, which crumbled away under his fingers. Alas! what I can I do with my wit? I have not enough to do great things with, and these little things are so fugitive, that while a man catches at the subject, he is only filling his hand with smoke. I must do with it as I do with my linnet, I keep him for the most part in a cage, but now and then set open the door, that he may whisk about the room a little, and then shut him up again. My whisking wit has produced the following, the subject of which is more important than the manner in which I have treated it seems to imply, but a fable may speak truth, and all truth is sterling, I only premise, that in a philosophical tract in the Register, I found it asserted that the glow-worm is the nightingale's food *

Have you heard? who has not? for a recommendatory advertisement of it is already published,—that a certain kinsman of your humble servant's has written a tract, now in the press, to prove polygamy a divine institution! A plurality of wives is intended, but not of husbands. The end proposed by the author is to remedy the prevailing practice of seduction,† by making the female delinquent *ipso facto* the lawful wife of the male. An officer of a regiment, part of which is quartered here, gave one of the soldiers leave to be drunk six weeks, in hopes of curing him by satiety he *was* drunk six weeks, and is so still, as often as he can find an opportunity One vice may swallow up another, but no coroner in the state of Ethics ever brought in his verdict, when a vice died, that it was—*felo de se*

They who value the man are sorry for his hook the rest say,

Solvuntur risu totule, tu missus abidas

* This Letter contained the fable of the Nightingale and Glow-worm

† In the original letter it is *adultery*,—but I have thought it right to correct an obvious mistake in writing

Thanks for all you have done, and all you intend ; the biography will be particularly welcome. Yours, W. C.

XCVII.

FEELINGS ON MR. NEWTON'S REMOVAL FROM
OLNEY.

TO MRS NEWTON.

DEAR MADAM,

March 4, 1780

To communicate surprise is almost, perhaps quite, as agreeable as to receive it. This is my present motive for writing to you rather than to Mr Newton. He would be pleased with hearing from me, but he would not be surprised at it, you see, therefore, I am selfish upon the present occasion, and principally consult my own gratification. Indeed, if I consult yours, I should be silent, for I have no such budget as the minister's furnished and stuffed with ways and means for every emergency, and shall find it difficult, perhaps, to raise supplies even for a short epistle.

You have observed in common conversation, that the man who coughs and blows his nose the oftenest, (I mean if he has not a cold,) does it because he has nothing to say. Even so it is in letter-writing a long preface, such as mine, is an ugly symptom, and always forebodes great sterility in the following pages.

The vicarage-house became a melancholy object, as soon as Mr Newton had left it, when you left it, it became more melancholy now it is actually occupied by another family, even I cannot look at it without being shocked. As I walked in the garden this evening, I saw the smoke issue from the study chimney, and said to myself, that used to be a sign that Mr. Newton was there, but it is so no longer. The walls of the house know nothing of the change that has taken place, the bolt of the chamber-door sounds just as it used to do, and when Mr. Page goes upstairs, for aught I know, or ever shall know, the fall of his foot could hardly, perhaps, be distinguished from that of Mr Newton. But Mr Newton's foot will never be heard upon that staircase again. These reflections, and such as these, occurred to me upon the occasion; and though in many respects I have no

more sensibility left than there is in brick and mortar, yet I am not permitted to be quite unfeeling upon this subject. If I were in a condition to leave Olney too, I certainly would not stay in it. It is no attachment to the place that binds me here, but an unfitness for every other. I lived in it once, but now I am buried in it, and have no business with the world on the outside of my sepulchre, my appearance would startle them, and theirs would be shocking to me.

Such are my thoughts about the matter. Others are more deeply affected, and by more weighty considerations, having been many years the objects of a ministry which they had reason to account themselves happy in the possession of, they fear they shall find themselves great sufferers by the alteration that has taken place, they would have had reason to fear it in any case. But Mr. Newton's successor does not bring with him the happiest presages, so that in the present state of things they have double reason for their fears. Though I can never be the better for Mr. Page, Mr. Page shall never be the worse for me. If his conduct shall even justify the worst apprehensions that have been formed of his character, it is no personal concern of mine. But this I can venture to say, that if he is not spotless, his spots will be seen, and the plainer, because he comes after Mr. Newton.

We were concerned at your account of Robert, and have little doubt but he will shuffle himself out of his place. Where he will find another, is a question not to be resolved by those who recommend him to this. I wrote him a long letter, a day or two after the receipt of yours, but I am afraid it was only clapping a blister upon the crown of a wig-block.

My respects attend Mr. Newton and yourself, accompanied with much affection for you both.

Yours, dear Madam, W. C.

XCVIII.

REJOICES IN HIS FRIEND'S INCREASE OF BUSINESS
 —THURLOW'S OPINION OF HIMSELF—POLITICS—
 FIXED AT OLNEY AND UNABLE TO BEAR
 EVEN THE THOUGHT OF LONDON.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 16, 1780.

IF I had had the horns of a snail, I should have drawn them in the moment I saw the reason of your epistolary brevity, because I felt it too. May your seven reams be multiplied into fourteen, till your letters become truly Lacedæmonian, and are reduced to a single syllable. Though I shall be a sufferer by the effect, I shall rejoice in the cause. You are naturally formed for business, and such a head as yours can never have too much of it. Though my predictions have been fulfilled in two instances, I do not plume myself much upon my sagacity, because it required but little to foresee that Thurlow would be chancellor, and that you would have a crowded office. As to the rest of my connexions, there, too, I have given proof of equal foresight, with not a jot more reason for vanity. Any body might see that they were too much like myself to be good for anything; disqualified by temper, and unfurnished with abilities to be useful either to themselves or others.

To use the phrase of all who ever wrote upon the state of Europe, the political horizon is dark indeed. The cloud has been thickening, and the thunder advancing many years. The storm now seems to be vertical, and threatens to burst upon the land, as if, with the next clap it would shake all to pieces. I did not know, (for I know nothing but what I learn from the General Evening,) that there was a deliberate purpose on the part of government, to set up the throne of despotism. If that is the case, no doubt but the standard of opposition will flame against it, till it has consumed to ashes the devisers of a project that in this country is sure to terminate in the ruin of those that form it. Alas, of what use is history, and why should kings be taught to read, if they read to so little purpose? As for me, I am no Quaker, except where military matters are in

question, and there I am much of the same mind with an honest man, who, when he was forced into the service, declared he would not fight, and gave this reason—because he saw nothing worth fighting for You will say, perhaps, Is not liberty worth a struggle ? True . but will success insure it to me ? Might I not, like the Americans, emancipate myself from one master, only to serve a score, and, with laurels upon my brow, sigh for my former chains again ?

Many thanks for your kind invitation Ditto to Mrs Hill, for the seeds—unexpected, and therefore the more welcome I have not a leg that is not tied to Olney , and if they were all at liberty, not one of them all would hop to London. The thought of it distresses me ; the sight of it would craze me.

You gave me great pleasure, by what you say of my uncle. His motto shall be

Hic ver perpetuum atque alienis muneribus astas

I remember the time when I have been kept waking, by the fear that he would die before me , but now, I think, I shall grow old first

Yours, my dear friend, affectionately, W C.

XCIX

REFORMATION NOT THE WORKS OF MAN ALONE —DANGER OF REVOLUTIONARY EXPERIMENTS.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

March 18, 1780

I AM obliged to you for the communication of your correspondence with—— It was impossible for any man, of any temper whatever, and however wedded to his own purpose, to resent so gentle and friendly an exhortation as you sent him Men of lively imaginations are not often remarkable for solidity of judgment They have generally strong passions to bias it, and are led far away from their proper road, in pursuit of pretty phantoms of their own creating No law ever did or can effect what he has ascribed to that of Moses , it is reserved for Mercy to subdue the corrupt inclinations of mankind, which threatenings

and penalties, through the depravity of the heart, have always had a tendency rather to inflame

The love of power seems as natural to kings, as the desire of liberty is to their subjects ; the excess of either is vicious, and tends to the ruin of both There are many, I believe, who wish the present corrupt state of things dissolved, in the hope that the pure primitive constitution will spring up from the ruins. But it is not for man by himself man, to bring order out of confusion ; the progress from one to the other is not natural, much less necessary, and without the intervention of divine aid, impossible ; and they who are for making the hazardous experiment, would certainly find themselves disappointed

Affectionately yours, W. C.

C

**PRESENTATION TO CHRIST'S HOSPITAL
KEEPING THE SABBATH.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 28, 1780.

I HAVE heard nothing more from Mr Newton upon the subject you mention , but I dare say that, having been given to expect the benefit of your nomination in behalf of his nephew, he still depends upon it His obligations to Mr Thornton have been so numerous, and so weighty, that though he has, in a few instances, prevailed upon himself to recommend an object now and then to his patronage, he has very sparingly, if at all, exerted his interest with him in behalf of his own relations The best way to reconcile yourself to this application of your bounty, will be to consider that your principal and main intention in it is to oblige your mother As to the boy—

“To whom related, or by whom begot,”

is a very unimportant part of the subject.

With respect to the advice you are required to give to a young lady, that she may be probably instructed in the manner of keeping the sabbath, you are so well qualified for the task yourself, that it is impossible you should need

any assistance, at least it is hardly possible that I should afford you any, who consider myself as no longer interested in the question. As you desire it, however, and I am not willing to refuse you the little that is in my power, I just subjoin a few hints that have occurred to me upon the occasion, not because I think you want them, but because it would seem unkind to withhold them. The sabbath then, I think may be considered, first, as a commandment, no less binding upon modern Christians than upon ancient Jews, because the spiritual people amongst them did not think it enough to abstain from manual occupations upon that day, but, entering more deeply into the meaning of the precept, allotted those hours they took from the world to the cultivation of holiness in their own souls,—which ever was, and ever will be, a duty incumbent upon all who ever heard of a sabbath, and is of perpetual obligation both upon Jews and Christians; (the commandment, therefore, enjoins it; the prophets have also enforced it, and in many instances, both scriptural and modern, the breach of it has been punished with a providential and judicial severity that may make by-standers tremble). secondly, as a privilege, which you well know how to dilate upon, better than I can tell you: thirdly, as a sign of that covenant by which believers are entitled to a rest that yet remaineth: fourthly, as the *sine quâ non* of the Christian character; and upon this head I should guard against being misunderstood to mean no more than two attendances upon public worship, which is a form complied with by thousands who never kept a sabbath in their lives. Consistency is necessary, to give substance and solidity to the whole. To sanctify the day at church, and to trifle it away out of church, is profanation, and vitiates all. After all, I could ask my catechumen one short question—"Do you love the day, or do you not? If you love it, you will never inquire how far you may safely deprive yourself of the enjoyment of it. If you do not love it, and you find yourself obliged in conscience to acknowledge it, that is an alarming symptom, and ought to make you tremble. If you do not love it, then it is a weariness to you, and you wish it was over. The ideas of labour and rest are not more oppo-

site to each other than the idea of a sabbath, and that dislike and disgust with which it fills the souls of thousands to be obliged to keep it. It is worse than bodily labour, more fatiguing than the drudgery of an ass." W. C.

CI

PLURALITIES—COWPER'S AMUSEMENTS.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 6, 1780.

I NEVER was, any more than yourself, a friend to pluralities, they are generally found in the hands of the avaricious, whose insatiable hunger after preferment proves them unworthy of any at all. They attend much to the regular payment of their dues, but not at all to the spiritual interests of their parishioners. Having forgot their duty, or never known it, they differ in nothing from the laity, except their outward garb, and their exclusive right to the desk and pulpit. But when pluralities seek the man, instead of being sought by him, and when the man is honest, conscientious, and pious, careful to employ a substitute in those respects like himself, and, not contented with this, will see with his own eyes that the concerns of his parishes are decently and diligently administered, in that case, considering the present dearth of such characters in the ministry, I think it an event advantageous to the people, and much to be desired by all who regret the great and apparent want of sobriety and earnestness among the clergy. A man who does not seek a living merely as a pecuniary emolument, has no need, in my judgment, to refuse one because it is so. He means to do his duty, and by doing it he earns his wages. The two Ramsdens being contiguous to each other, and falling easily under the care of one pastor, and both so often as near to Stock that you can visit them without difficulty, as you please, I see no reasonable objection, nor does your mother. As to the wry-mouthed sneers and liberal misconstructions of the censorious, I know no better shield to guard you against them, than what you are already furnished with,—a clear and unoffended conscience.

The salmon came safe and punctual to its assignation, it served us for two dinners and six suppers, was remarkably fresh and fine. Item, the lobster.

I am obliged to you for what you said upon the subject of book-buying, and am very fond of availing myself of another man's pocket, when I can do it creditably to myself and without injury to him. Amusements are necessary, in a retirement like mine, especially in such a state of mind as I labour under. The necessity of amusement makes me sometimes write verses, it made me a carpenter, a birdcage maker, a gardener, and has lately taught me to draw, and to draw too with such surprising proficiency in the art, considering my total ignorance of it two months ago, that when I show your mother my productions, she is all admiration and applause.

You need never fear the communication of what you entrust to us in confidence. You know your mother's delicacy in this point sufficiently, and as for me, I once wrote a Connoisseur upon the subject of secret keeping, and from that day to this I believe I have never divulged one.

We were much pleased with Mr Newton's application to you for a charity sermon, and with what he said upon that subject in his last letter, "that he was glad of an opportunity to give you that proof of his regard."

Believe me yours, with the customary, but not therefore unmeaning addition of love to all under your roof. Your mother sends hers, which being maternal, is put up in a separate parcel.

W. C.

CII.

A LOQUACIOUS VISITOR.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Olney, April 16, 1780

SINCE I wrote my last we have had a visit from— I did not feel myself vehemently disposed to receive him with that complaisance, from which a stranger generally infers that he is welcome. By this manner, which was rather bold than easy, I judged that there was no occasion

for it, and that it was a trifle which, if he did not meet with, neither would he feel the want of. He has the air of a travelled man, but not of a travelled gentleman, is quite delivered from that reserve which is so common an ingredient in the English character, yet does not open himself gently and gradually, as men of polite behaviour do, but bursts upon you all at once. He talks very loud, and when our poor little robins hear a great noise, they are immediately seized with an ambition to surpass it, the increase of their vociferation occasioned an increase of his, and his in return acted as a stimulus upon theirs; neither side entertained a thought of giving up the contest, which became continually more interesting to our ears, during the whole visit. The birds, however, survived, and so did we. They perhaps flatter themselves they gained a complete victory, but I believe Mr.———could have killed them both in another hour.

W. C.

CIII.

VARIETY OF HIS TOPICS—RURAL SCENERY—
AMUSEMENTS IN TRIPLES.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

May 3, 1780.

DEAR SIR,

You indulge me in such a variety of subjects, and allow me such a latitude of excursion in this scribbling employment that I have no excuse for silence. I am much obliged to you for swallowing such holuses as I send you, for the sake of my gilding, and verily believe that I am the only man alive, from whom they would be welcome to a palate like yours. I wish I could make them more splendid than they are, more alluring to the eye, at least, if not more pleasing to the taste; but my leaf gold is tarnished, and have received such a tinge from the vapours that are ever brooding over my mind, that I think it no small proof of your partiality to me, that you will read my letters. I am not fond of longwinded metaphors; I have always observed, that they halt at the latter end of their progress, and ^{do} so do mine. I deal much in ink indeed, but not such ink as is employed by poets, and writers of essays. Mine is a harmless fluid,

and guilty of no deceptions but such as may prevail without the least injury to the person imposed on. I draw mountains, valleys, woods, and streams, and ducks, and dabchicks. I admire them myself, and Mrs. Unwin admires them; and her praise, and my praise put together, are fame enough for me. Oh! I could spend whole days and moonlight nights in feeding upon a lovely prospect! My eyes drink the rivers as they flow. If every human being upon earth could think for one quarter of an hour as I have done for many years, there might perhaps be many miserable men among them, but not an unawakened one could be found from the arctic to the antarctic circle. At present the difference between them and me is greatly to their advantage. I delight in baubles, and know them to be so, for rested in, and viewed without a reference to their Author, what is the earth,—what are the planets—what is the sun itself but a bauble? Better for a man never to have seen them, or to see them with the eyes of a brute, stupid and unconscious of what he beholds, than not to be able to say, "The Maker of all these wonders is my friend." Their eyes have never been opened, to see that they are trifles, mine have been, and will be till they are closed for ever. They think a fine estate, a large conservatory, a hot-house rich as a west Indian garden things of consequence, visit them with pleasure, and muse upon them with ten times more. I am pleased with a frame of four lights, doubtful whether the few pines it contains will ever be worth a farthing, amuse myself with a greenhouse which Lord Bute's gardener could take upon his back, and walk away with, and when I have paid it the accustomed visit, and watered it, and given it air, I say to myself—"This is not mine, it is a plaything lent me for the present; I must leave it soon." W. C.

CIV.

**COWPER'S REPUTATION AT 'OLNEY AS A
LAWYER—THURLOW'S ILLNESS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, May 6, 1780.

I AM much obliged to you for your speedy answer to my queries. I know less of the law than a country attorney,

yet sometimes I think I have almost as much business. My former connexion with the profession has got wind ; and though I earnestly profess, and protest, and proclaim it abroad that I know nothing of the matter, they cannot be persuaded to believe, that a head once endued with a legal periwig can ever be deficient in those natural endowments it is supposed to cover. I have had good fortune to be once or twice in the right, which, added to the cheapness of a gratuitous counsel, has advanced my credit to a degree I never expected to attain in the capacity of a lawyer. Indeed, if two of the wisest in the science of jurisprudence may give opposite opinions on the same point, which does not unfrequently happen, it seems to be a matter of indifference whether a man answers by rule or at a venture. He that stumbles upon the right side of the question is just as useful to his client as he that arrives at the same end by regular approaches, and is conducted to the mark he aims at by the greatest authorities.

* * * * *

These violent attacks of a distemper so often fatal, are very alarming to all who esteem and respect the Chancellor as he deserves. A life of confinement, and of anxious attention to important objects, where the habit is bilious to such a terrible degree, threatens to be but a short one ; and I wish he may not be made a text for men of reflection to moralize upon, affording a conspicuous instance of the transient and fading nature of all human accomplishments and attainments.

Yours affectionately,

W C.

CV.

**ARDOUR IN HIS EMPLOYMENT—EXPECTS A VISIT
FROM HIS FRIEND—REMARKS ON THE
REBELLION.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 8, 1790.

My scribbling humour has of late been entirely absorbed in the passion for landscape drawing. It is a most amusing

art, and like every other art, requires much practice and attention.

*Nil sine multo
Vita labore dedit mortalibus.*

Excellence is providentially placed beyond the reach of indolence, that success may be reward of industry, and that idleness may be punished with obscurity and disgrace. So long as I am pleased with an employment, I am capable of unwearied application, because my feelings are all of the intense kind. I never received a *little* pleasure from any thing in my life ; if I am delighted, it is in the extreme. The unhappy consequence of this temperature is, that my attachment to any occupation seldom outlives the novelty of it. That nerve of my imagination that feels the touch of any particular amusement, twangs under the energy of pressure with so much vehemence, that it soon becomes sensible of weariness and fatigue. Hence I draw an unfavourable prognostic, and expect that I shall shortly be constrained to look out for something else. Then perhaps I may string the lyre again, and be able to comply with your demand.

Now for the visit you propose to pay us, and propose *not* to pay us, the hope of which plays about upon your paper like a jack-o-lantern upon the ceiling. This is no mean simile, for Virgil (you remember) uses it. It is here, it is there, it vanishes, it returns, it dazzles you, a cloud interposes and it is gone. However just the comparison, I hope you will contrive to spoil it, and that your final determination will be to come. As to the masons you expect, bring them with you, — bring brick, bring mortar, bring every thing that would oppose itself to your journey, — all shall be welcome. I have a greenhouse that is too small, come and enlarge it ; build me a pinery, repair the garden wall, that has great need of your assistance, do any thing ; you cannot do too much, so far from thinking you and your train troublesome, we shall rejoice to see you, upon these or upon any other terms you can propose. But to be serious, — you will do well to consider that a long summer is before you ; that the party will not have such another opportunity to meet this great while, that you may finish your masonry long enough be-

fore winter, though you should not begin this month, but that you cannot always find your brother and sister Powley at Olney. These and some other considerations, such as the desire we have to see you, and the pleasure we expect from seeing you all together, may and, I think, ought to overcome your scruples.

From a general recollection of Lord Clarendon's History of the Rebellion, I thought (and I remember I told you so) that there was a striking resemblance between that period and the present. But I am now reading, and have read three volumes of Hume's History, one of which is engrossed entirely by that subject. There I see reason to alter my opinion, and the seeming resemblance has disappeared upon a more particular information. Charles succeeded to a long train of arbitrary princes, whose subjects had tamely acquiesced in the despotism of their masters, till their privileges were all forgot. He did but tread in their steps, and exemplify the principles in which he had been brought up, when oppressed his people. But just at that time, unhappily for the monarch, the subject began to see and to see that he had a right to property and freedom. This marks a sufficient difference between the disputes of that day and the present. But there was another main cause of that rebellion, which at this time does not operate at all. The king was devoted to the hierarchy, his subjects were puritans and would not bear it. Every circumstance of ecclesiastical order and discipline was an abomination to them, and in his esteem an indispensable duty. And though at last he was obliged to give up many things, he would not abolish episcopacy and till that were done his concessions could have no conciliating effect. These two concurring causes were indeed sufficient to set three kingdoms in a flame. But they subsist not now, nor any other, I hope, notwithstanding the bustle made by the patriots, equal to the production of such terrible events.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CVI.

ON THE LOSS OF HER BROTHER, FREDERICK
MADAN, A SOLDIER, WHO DIED IN
AMERICA.

TO MRS. COWPER.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

May 10, 1780

I DO not write to comfort you ; that office is not likely to be well performed by one who has no comfort for himself ; nor to comply with an impertinent ceremony, which in general might well be spared upon such occasions but because I would not seem indifferent to the concerns of those I have so much reason to esteem and love. If I did not sorrow for your brother's death, I should expect that nobody would for mine, when I knew him, he was much beloved, and I doubt not continued to be so To live and die together is the lot of a few happy families, who hardly know what a separation means, and one sepulchre serves them all ; but the ashes of our kindred are dispersed indeed. Whether the American gulf has swallowed up any other of my relations, I know not ; it has made many mourners.

Believe me, my dear cousin, though after a long silence, which perhaps nothing less than the present concern could have prevailed with me to interrupt, as much as ever,

Your affectionate kinsman, W. C.

CVII.

FALSE READING OF MR. NEWTON'S IN A FORMER
LETTER—BENTLEY.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 10, 1780.

IF authors could have lived to adjust and authenticate their own text, a commentator would have been an useless creature For instance—if Dr Bentley had found, or opined that he had found, the word *tube* where it seemed to present itself to you, and had judged the subject worthy of his critical acumen, he would either have justified the corrupt reading, or have substituted some invention of his own, in defence of which he would have exerted all his

polemical abilities, and have quarrelled with half the literati in Europe. Then suppose the writer himself, as in the present case, to interpose with a gentle whisper thus—“If you look again, Doctor, you will perceive that what appears to you to be *tube*, is neither more nor less than the simple monosyllable *ink*, but I wrote it in great haste, and the want of sufficient precision in the character has occasioned your mistake *you* will be especially satisfied when you see the sense* elucidated by the explanation.”—But I question whether the doctor would quit his ground, or allow any author to be a competent judge in his own case. The world, however, would acquiesce immediately, and vote the critic useless.

James Andrews, who is my Michael Angelo, pays me many compliments on my success in the art of drawing, but I have not yet the vanity to think myself qualified to furnish your apartment. If I should ever attain to the degree of self-opinion requisite to such an undertaking, I shall labour at it with pleasure. I can only say, though I hope not with the affected modesty of the above-mentioned Dr Bentley, who said the same thing,

Me quoque dicunt
Vatem pastores. Sed non Ego credulus illis

A crow, rook, or raven has built a nest in one of the young elm trees, at the side of Mrs Asprays' orchard. In the violent storm that blew yesterday morning, I saw it agitated to a degree that seemed to threaten its immediate destruction and versified the following thoughts upon the occasion †

W. C.

CVIII

THE GINGERBREAD-BAKER'S MISFORTUNE—FABLE OF THE DOVES ENCLOSED.

TO MRS NEWTON.

DEAR MADAM,

June, 1780,

WHEN I write to Mr Newton, he answers me by letter? when I write to you, you answer me in fish. I return you

* The passage alluded to seems to be in his letter of May 3, p. 230.

† Cowper's Fable of the Raven concluded this letter.

many thanks for the mackerel and lobster. They assured me in terms as intelligible as pen and ink could have spoken, that you still remember *Orchard-side*, and though they never spoke in their lives, and it was still less to be expected from them that they should speak, being dead, they gave us an assurance of your affection that corresponds exactly with that which Mr Newton expresses towards us in all his letters — For my own part, I never in my life began a letter more at a venture than the present. It is possible that I may finish it, but perhaps more than probable that I shall not. I have had several indifferent nights, and the wind is easterly, two circumstances so unfavourable to me in all my occupations, but especially that of writing, that it was with the greatest difficulty I could even bring myself to attempt it.

You have never yet perhaps been made acquainted with the unfortunate Tom Freeman's misadventure. He and his wife returning from Hanslip fair, were coming down Weston Lane to wit, themselves, their horse, and their great wooden panniers, at ten o'clock at night. The horse having a lively imagination, and very weak nerves, fancied he either saw or heard something, but has never been able to say what. A sudden fright will impart activity, and a momentary vigour, even to lameness itself. Accordingly, he started, and sprung from the middle of the road to the side of it, with such surprising acuity, that he dismounted the gingerbread baker and his gingerbread wife in a moment. Not contented with this effort, nor thinking himself yet out of danger, he proceeded as fast as he could to a full gallop, rushed against the gate at the bottom of the lane, and opened it for himself, without perceiving that there was any gate there. Still he galloped, and with a velocity and momentum continually increasing, till he arrived in Olney. I had been in bed about ten minutes, when I heard the most uncommon and unaccountable noise that can be imagined. It was, in fact, occasioned by the clattering of tin pattypans and a Dutch-oven against the sides of the panniers. Much gingerbread was picked up in the street, and Mr Lucy's windows were broken all to pieces. Had this been all, it would have been a comedy, but we learned the next morning, that the poor woman's collar-bone was

broken, and she has hardly been able to resume her occupation since.

What is added on the other side, if I could have persuaded myself to write sooner, would have reached you sooner; 'tis about ten days old. * * *

"The Doves."

The male Dove was smoking a pipe, and the female Dove was sewing, while she delivered herself as above. This little circumstance may lead you perhaps to guess what pair I had in my eye.

Yours, dear Madam, Wm. COWPER.

CIX.

POPE'S LETTERS—QUESTION WHETHER A CLERGYMAN CAN BE COMPELLED TO TAKE A PARISH APPRENTICE—TRANSLATION OF A SIMILE IN THE PARADISE LOST—VERSIFICATION OF A THOUGHT.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND.

June 8, 1780.

It is possible I might have indulged myself in the pleasure of writing to you, without waiting for a letter from you, but for a reason which you will not easily guess. Your mother communicated to me the satisfaction you expressed in my correspondence, that you thought me entertaining and clever, and so forth—now you must know, I love praise dearly, especially from the judicious, and those who have so much delicacy themselves as not to offend mine in giving it. But then, I found this consequence attending, or likely to attend the eulogium you bestowed;—if my friend thought me witty before, he shall think me ten times more witty hereafter;—where I joked once, I will joke five times, and for one sensible remark I will send him a dozen. Now this foolish vanity would have spoiled me quite, and would have made me as disgusting a letter-writer as Pope, who seems to have thought that unless a sentence was well turned and every period pointed with some conceit, it was not worth the carriage. Accordingly

he is to me, except in very few instances, the most disagreeable maker of epistles that ever I met with. I was willing, therefore, to wait till the impression your commendation had made upon the foolish part of me was worn off that I might scribble away as usual, and write my uppermost thoughts, and those only.

You are better skilled in ecclesiastical law than I am. Mrs Powley desires me to inform her, whether a parson can be obliged to take an apprentice. For some of her husband's opposers at Dewsbury threaten to clap one upon him. Now I think it would be rather hard, if clergymen, who are not allowed to exercise any handicraft whatever, should be subject to such an imposition. If Mr Powley was a cordwainer, or a breeches-maker, all the week, and a preacher only on Sundays, it would seem reasonable enough, in that case, that he should take an apprentice, if he chose it. But even then, in my poor judgment, he ought to be left to his option. If they mean by an apprentice, a pupil, whom they will oblige him to hew into a parson, and after chipping away the block that hides the minister within, to qualify him to stand erect in a pulpit,—that indeed is another consideration.—But still, we live in a free country, and I cannot bring myself even to suspect that an English divine can possibly be liable to such compulsion. Ask your uncle, however, for he is wiser in these things than either of us.

I thank you for your two inscriptions, and like the last the best; the thought is just and fine, but the two last lines are sadly damaged by the monkish jingle of *peperit* and *reperit*. I have not yet translated them, nor do I promise to do it, though at some idle hour perhaps I may. In return, I send you a translation of a simile in the *Paradise Lost*. Not having that poem at hand, I cannot refer you to the book and page, but you may hunt for it, if you think it worth your while. It begins—

"So when, from mountain tops, the dusky clouds
Ascending," &c.
Quales æræ montis de vertice nubes
Cum surgunt, et jam Boreæ tumida ora quierunt,
Cælum hilares abdit, apicem caligine, vultus.
Tum in jucundo tandem sol prodeat ore,

Et croceo montes et pascua lumine tingat.
 Gaudent omnia, aves mulcent concentibus agros,
 Balatque ovium colles, vallesque resultant.

If you spy any fault in my Latin, tell me, for I am sometimes in doubt ; but, as I told you when you were here, I have not a Latin book in the world to consult, or correct a mistake by, and some years have passed since I was a schoolboy.

*An English Verification of a Thought that popped into my Head
 about two Months since.*

Sweet stream ! that winds through yonder glade—
 Apt emblem of a virtuous maid !—
 Silent, and chaste, she steals along,
 Far from the world's gay busy throng ;
 With gentle, yet prevailing force,
 Intent upon her destin'd course
 Graceful, and useful, all she does,
 Blessing, and bless'd, where'er she goes .
 Pure-bosom'd, as that watery glass
 And Heaven reflected in her face !

Now this is not so exclusively applicable to a maiden, as to be the sole property of your sister Shuttleworth. If you look at Mrs Unwin, you will see that she has not lost her right to this just praise by marrying you.

Your mother sends her love to all, and mine comes jogging along by the side of it Yours, W C.

—
 CX

RIOTS IN LONDON.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

DEAR SIR,

June 12, 1780,

WE accept it as an effort of your friendship, that you could prevail with yourself, in a time of such terror and distress, to send us repeated accounts of yours and Mrs Newton's welfare, you supposed, with reason enough, that we should be apprehensive for your safety, situated as you were, apparently, within the reach of so much danger. We rejoice that you have escaped it all, and that, except the anxiety which you must have felt, both for yourselves and others, you have suffered nothing upon this dreadful occasion. A metropolis

in flames, and a nation in ruins, are subjects of contemplation for such a mind as yours that will leave a lasting impression behind them. It is well that the design died in the execution, and will be buried, I hope never to rise again, in the ashes of its own combustion. "There is a melancholy pleasure in looking back upon such a scene, arising from a comparison of possibilities with facts, the enormous bulk of the intended mischief with the abortive and partial accomplishment of it. Much was done, more indeed than could have been supposed practicable in a well-regulated city, not unfurnished with a military force for its protection. But surprise and astonishment seem at first to have struck every nerve of the police with a palsy, and to have disarmed government of all its powers.

I congratulate you upon the wisdom that withheld you from entering yourself a member of the Protestant association. Your friends who did so have reason enough to regret their doing it, even though they should never be called upon. Innocent as they are, and they who know them cannot doubt of their being perfectly so, it is likely to bring an odium on the profession they make, that will not soon be forgotten. Neither is it possible for a quiet, inoffensive man, to discover, on a sudden, that his zeal has carried him into such company, without being to the last degree shocked at his imprudence. *Their* religion was an honourable mantle, like that of Elijah, but the majority wore cloaks of Guy Fawkes's time, and meant nothing so little as what they pretended. W C

CXI

REPORT THAT FRENCH EMISSARIES WERE CONCERNED IN THE RIOTS—LATIN EPIGRAM ON THAT SUBJECT.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

REVEREND AND DEAR WILLIAM,

June 18, 1790.

THE affairs of kingdoms, and the concerns of individuals, are variegated alike with the chequer-work of joy and sorrow. The news of a great acquisition in America has succeeded

to terrible tumults in London, and the beams of prosperity are now playing upon the smoke of that conflagration which so lately terrified the whole land. These sudden changes, which are matter of every man's observation, and may therefore always be reasonably expected, serve to hold up the chin of despondency above water, and preserve mankind in general from the sin and misery of accounting existence a burden not to be endured;—an evil we should be sure to encounter, if we were not warranted to look for a bright reverse of our most afflictive experiences.

We are obliged to you for your early communication of the surrender of Charles Town, and rejoice with you in an event, which, if my political spectacles do not deceive me, is likely to bring the rebellion to a speedy end. The Spaniards were sick of the war at the very commencement of it, and I hope that, by this time, the French themselves begin to find themselves a little indisposed, if not desirous of peace, which that restless and meddling temper of theirs is incapable of desiring for its own sake. But is it true, that this detestable plot was an egg laid in France and hatched in London, under the influence of French corruption?—*Nam te scire, deos quoniam propius contingit, oportet.* The offspring has the features of such a parent, and yet, without the clearest proof of the fact, I would not willingly charge upon a civilized nation what perhaps the most barbarous would abhor the thought of. I no sooner saw the surmise however in the paper, than I immediately began to write Latin verses upon the occasion. "An odd effect," you will say, "of such a circumstance"—but an effect, nevertheless, that whatever has, at any time, moved my passions whether pleasantly or otherwise, has always had upon me, were I to express what I feel upon such occasions in prose, it would be verbose, inflated, and disgusting. I therefore have recourse to verse, as a suitable vehicle for the most vehement expressions my thoughts suggest to me. What I have written, I did not write so much for the comfort of the English, as for the mortification of the French. You will immediately perceive, therefore, that I have been labouring in vain, and that this bouncing explosion is likely to spend itself in the air. For I have no means of circulating

what follows through all the French territories, and unless that, or something like it, can be done, my indignation will be entirely fruitless. Tell me how I can convey it into Sartine's pocket, or who will lay it upon his desk for me. But read it first, and unless you think it pointed enough to sting the Gaul to the quick, burn it.

*In seditionem horrendam, corruptelis Galliens, ut fertur Londini
nupei exortam.*

Perfida, crubelia, vi ta et lymphata furore,
Non armis, lauium Gallia fraude petit.
Venalem pretio plebem conduit, et urit
Undique privatas patriciasque domos
Nequicquam conata sua, fedissima sperat
Posse tamen nostrâ nos superare manu.
Gallia, vana struis ! Procidus nunc utere ! Vincas,
Nam mites timidis, supplicibusque sumus

I have lately exercised my ingenuity in contriving an exercise for yours, and have composed a riddle, which, if it does not make you laugh before you have solved it, will probably do it afterwards. I would transcribe it now, but am really so fatigued with writing, that unless I knew you had a quinsy, and that a fit of laughter might possibly save your life, I could not prevail with myself to do it.

What could you possibly mean, slender as you are, by sallying out upon your two-walking-sticks at two in the morning, into the midst of such a tumult? We admire your prowess, but cannot commend your prudence.

Our love attends you all, collectively and individually,

Yours, W C

CXII

ROBERTSON—SUMMER IDLENESS.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND

June 22, 1780

A word or two in answer to two or three questions of yours, which I have hitherto taken no notice of. I am not in a scribbling mood, and shall therefore make no excursions to amuse either myself or you. The needful will be as much as I can manage at present, the playful must wait for another opportunity.

I thank you for your offer of Robertson, but I have more reading upon my hands at this present writing than I shall get rid of in a twelve month —and this moment recollect that I have seen it already. He is an author that I admire much, with one exception, that I think his style is too laboured. Hume, as an historian, pleases me more.

I have just read enough of the *Biographia Britannica*, to say, that I have tasted it, and have no doubt but I shall like it. I am pretty much in the garden at this season of the year, so read but little. In summer-time I am as giddy-headed as a boy, and can settle to nothing. Winter condenses me, and makes me lumpish and sober, and then I can read all day long.

For the same reasons, I have no need of the landscapes at present, when I want them I will renew my application, and repeat the description, but it will hardly be before October.

I congratulate you upon a duplicate of Rumsden's. As your charge is become twofold, may your satisfaction be so too. Mine is sure to be doubled, because you have promised me a present of salmon.

Before I arose this morning, I composed the three following stanzas. I send them because I like them pretty well myself and if you should not, you must accept this handsome compliment as an amends for their deficiencies. You may print the lines, if you judge them worth it*.

I have only time to add love, &c, and my two initials

W C

CXIII

**PROPHECIES UNWITTINGLY MADE—CHARACTER
OF HIS OWN LETTERS - MR. NEWTON SLAN-
DERED—LACE-MAKERS' PETITION.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 23, 1780

YOUR reflections upon the state of London, 'the sins and enormities of the great city, while you had a distant view of

* Verses on the burning of Lord Mansfield's library, &c.

it from Greenwich, seem to have been prophetic of the heavy stroke that fell upon it just after. Man often prophesies without knowing it, a spirit speaks by him which is not his own, though he does not at that time suspect that he is under the influence of any other. Did he foresee what is always foreseen by Him who dictates what he supposes to be his own, he would suffer by anticipation, as well as by consequence, and wish perhaps as ardently for the happy ignorance, to which he is at present so much indebted, as some have foolishly and inconsiderately done for a knowledge that would be but another name for misery.

And why have I said all this? especially to you, who have hitherto said it to me - not because I had the least desire of informing a wiser man than myself, but because the observation was naturally suggested by the recollection of your letter, and that letter, though not the last, happened to be uppermost in my mind. I can compare this mind of mine to nothing that resembles it more, than to a board that is under the carpenter's plane, (I mean while I am writing to you,) the shavings are my uppermost thoughts, after a few strokes of the tool, it acquires a new surface, this again, upon a repetition of his task, he takes off, and a new surface still succeeds whether the shavings of the present day will be worth your acceptance, I know not, I am unfortunately made neither of cedar nor of mahogany, but *Truncus ficulnus*, *inutile lignum*, consequently, though I should be planned till I am as thin as a wafer, it will be but rubbish to the last.

It is not strange that you should be the subject of a false report, for the sword of slander, like that of war, devours one as well as another, and a blameless character is particularly delicious to its unsparing appetite. But that you should be the object of such a report, you who meddle less with the designs of government than almost any man that lives under it, this is strange indeed. It is well, however, when they who account it good sport to traduce the reputation of another, invent a story that refutes itself. I wonder they do not *always* endeavour to accommodate their fiction to the real character of the person, their tale would then at least have an air of probability, and it might cost a peaceable good man much more trouble to disprove it. But perhaps

it would not be easy to discern what part of your conduct lies more open to such an attempt than another, or what it is that you either say or do, at any time, that presents a fair opportunity to the most ingenious slanderer, to slip in a falsehood between your words, or actions, that shall seem to be of a piece with either. You hate compliment, I know, but by your leave this is not one—it is a truth—worse and worse! now I have praised you indeed—well, you must thank yourself for it; it was absolutely done without the least intention on my part, and proceeded from a pen that, as far as I can remember, was never guilty of flattery since I knew how to hold it. He that slanders me, paints me blacker than I am, and he that flatters me, whiter—they both daub me, and when I look in the glass of conscience, I see myself disguised by both. I had as lief my tailor should sew gingerbread nuts on my coat instead of buttons, as that any man should call my Bristol stone a diamond. The tailor's trick would not at all embellish my suit, nor the flatterers make me at all the richer. I never make a present to my friend, of what I dislike myself. Ergo, (I have reached the conclusion at last,) I did not mean to flatter you.

We have sent a petition to Lord Dartmouth, by this post praying him to interfere in parliament in behalf of the poor lace-makers. I say we, because I have signed it, Mr G. drew it up, Mr —— did not think it grammatical, therefore he would not sign it. Yet I think Priscian himself would have pardoned the manner for the sake of the matter. I dare say if his lordship does not comply with the prayer of it, it will not be because he thinks it of more consequence to write grammatically, than that the poor should eat, but for some better reason.

My love to all under your roof. Yours, W C

CXIV.

CARE IN CORRECTING HIS VERSES—LATIN
EPITAPH.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 2, 1780

CARISSIME, I am glad of your confidence, and have reason to hope I shall never abuse it. If you trust me with a secret, I am hermetically sealed; and if you call for the exercise of my judgment, such as it is, I am never freakish or wanton in the use of it, much less mischievous and malignant. Critics, I believe, do not often stand so clear of these vices as I do. I like your epitaph, except that I doubt the propriety of the word *immaturus*, which, I think, is rather applicable to fruits than flowers, and except the last pentameter, the assertion it contains being rather too obvious a thought to finish with—not that I think an epitaph should be pointed like an epigram. But still there is a closeness of thought and expression necessary in the conclusion of all these little things, that they may leave an agreeable flavour upon the palate. Whatever is short, should be nervous, masculine, and compact. Little men are so, and little poems should be so, because, where the work is short, the author has no right to the plea of weariness, and laziness is never admitted as an available excuse in any thing. Now you know my opinion, you will very likely improve upon my improvement, and alter my alterations for the better. To touch and retouch is, though some writers boast of negligence, and others would be ashamed to show their foul copies, the secret of almost all good writing, especially in verse. I am never weary of it myself, and if you would take as much pains as I do, you would have no need to ask for my corrections.

*Hic sepultus est
Inter suorum lacrymas
GULIELMUS NORTHCOT
GULIELMI et MARIE filius.
Unicus, unicus dilectus,
Qui florix ritu succinus est semihiantis,
Aprilis die septimo,
1780, æt. 10.*

*Care, vale ! Sed non æternùm, care, valet !
 Namque sterùm, tecum, sive modò dignus ero ·
 Tum nihil amplexus poterit divellere nostros,
 Nec tu marcesces, nec lacrymabor ego.*

Having an English translation of it by me, I send it, though it may be of no use

Farewell ! "but not for ever," Hope replies,
 "Trace but his steps, and meet him in the skies !"
 There nothing shall renew our parting pain,
 Thou shalt not wither, nor I weep again !

The stanzas that I sent you are maiden ones, having never been seen by any eye but your mother's and your own.

If you send me franks, I shall write longer letters—
Valete, sicut et nos valemus ! Amate, sicut et nos amamus

CXV.

LACE-MAKERS' PETITION.

TO JOSEPH HILL ESQ.

MON AMI,

July 8, 1780

If you ever take the tip of the Chancellor's ear between your finger and thumb, you can hardly improve the opportunity to better purpose, than if you should whisper into it the voice of compassion and lenity to the lace makers. I am an eye-witness of their poverty, and do know that hundreds in this little town are upon the point of starving, and that the most unremitting industry is but barely sufficient to keep them from it I know that the bill by which they would have been so fatally affected is thrown out · but Lord Stormont threatens them with another, and if another like it should pass, they are undone We lately sent a petition from hence to Lord Dartmouth, I signed it, and am sure the contents are true The purport of it was to inform him that there are very near one thousand two hundred lace-makers in this beggarly town, the most of whom had reason enough, while the bill was in agitation, to look upon every loaf they bought as the last they should ever be able to earn I can never think it good policy to incur the certain inconvenience of ruining thirty thousand, in order to prevent a remote and possible damage though to a much

greater number. The measure is like a scythe, and the poor lace-makers are the sickly crop that trembles before the edge of it. The prospect of peace with America is like the streak of dawn in their horizon, but this bill is like a black cloud behind it, that threatens their hope of a comfortable day with utter extinction.

I did not perceive till this moment, that I had tacked two similes together, a practice which, though warranted by the example of Homer, and allowable in an epic poem, is rather luxuriant and licentious in a letter. lest I should add another, I conclude

W. C.

CXVI.

RIOTS IN LONDON.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

NON AMI,

July 8, 1780

By this time, I suppose, you have ventured to take your fingers out of your ears, being delivered from the deafening shouts of the most zealous mob that ever strained their lungs in the cause of religion. I congratulate you upon a gentle relapse into the customary sounds of a great city, which, though we rustics abhor them, as noisy and dissonant, are a musical and sweet murmur, compared with what you have lately heard. The tinkling of a kennel may be distinguished now, where the roaring of a cascade would have been sunk and lost. I never suspected, till the newspapers informed me of it, a few days since, that the barbarous uproar had reached Great Queen Street. I hope Mrs. Hill was in the country, and shall rejoice to hear that, as I am sure you did not take up the protestant cudgels upon this hair-brained occasion, so you have not been pulled in pieces as a papist.

WM. COWPER.

CXVII

**GARDENING—EPIGRAMS TRANSLATED—
THELYPHTHORA.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

July 11, 1780.

I HAVE no oracular responses to make you upon the subject of gardening, while I know that you have both Miller and

Mawe in your possession, to them I refer you, but especially to the latter, because it will be little or no trouble to consult him. I have heard that if the first crop of roses are cut off as fast as the buds appear, a second will be produced in autumn. I do not know it to be true, but the fact is easily ascertained, and I recommend it to Miss Shuttleworth to make the experiment with her scissors.

I account myself sufficiently commended for my Latin exercise, by the number of translations it has undergone. That which you distinguished in the margin by the word "better," was the production of a friend; and, except that for a modest reason he omitted the third couplet, I think it is a good one. To finish the group, I have translated it myself, and though I would not wish you to give it to the world, for more reasons than one, especially lest some French hero should call me to an account for it,—I add it on the other side. An author ought to be the best judge of his own meaning, and, whether I have succeeded or not, I cannot but wish, that where a translator is wanted, the writer was always to be his own

False, cruel, disappointed, stung to the heart,
France quits the warrior's for the assassin's part;
To dirty hands, a dirty bribe conveys,
Bids the low street and lofty palace blaze.
Her sons too weak to vanquish us alone,
She hires the worst and basest of our own.
Kneel, France! a suppliant conquers us with ease;
We always spare a coward on his knees.

I have often wondered that Dryden's illustrious epigram on Milton (in my mind the second best that ever was made) has never been translated into Latin, for the admiration of the learned in other countries. I have at last presumed to venture upon the task myself. The great closeness of the original, which is equal in that respect to the most compact Latin I ever saw, made it extremely difficult.

*Tres, tria, sed longe distantia secula, Vates
Ostant, tribus gentibus, eximios
Græcia sublimem, cum majestate disertum
Roma tulit, fatis Anglia utriusque parem.
Partibus ex binis Natus: a exhausta, coacta est
Terribus ut fieret, consociare Duos,*

I have not one bright thought upon the chancellor's recovery, nor can I strike off so much as one sparkling atom from that brilliant subject. It is not when I will, nor upon what I will, but as a thought happens to occur to me, and then I versify, whether I will or not. I never write but for my amusement, and what I write is sure to answer that end, if it answers no other. If, besides this purpose, the more desirable one of entertaining you be effected, I then receive double fruit of my labour, and consider this produce of it as a second crop, the more valuable, because less expected. But when I have once remitted a composition to you, I have done with it. It is pretty certain that I shall never read it or think of it again. From that moment I have constituted you sole judge of its accomplishments, if it has any, and of its defects, which it is sure to have.

For this reason I decline answering the question with which you concluded your last, and cannot persuade myself to enter into a critical examen of the two pieces upon Lord Mansfield's loss, either with respect to their intrinsic or comparative merit, and indeed after having rather discouraged that use of them which you had designed, there is no occasion for it.

I understand, though I have not seen it, that the author of *Thelyphthora* establishes many of his premises upon his own peculiar interpretation of the original Hebrew. I am therefore absolutely incompetent to decide the question whether he has Scripture on his side or not, and have no more curiosity to see his book than I should have if it were written in that language. If I had a wife of whom I was weary, and wished to be indulged with the liberty of taking another, I would certainly read it, and study it too. I should be encouraged in this undertaking, by a hope that passion, prejudice, and appetite combining together with the author's ingenuity to impose upon me, might succeed, and release me from the rusty and old-fashioned bonds of fidelity, friendship, and love. But I have no interest in the question, at least no other interest than that of every man who wishes well to his country, and would be sorry to see the honest and faithful English husband converted into a Turkish stallion, and the amiable character of the English

wife, the most amiable in the world, degraded into the sordid and base condition of a brood mare. W. C.

CXVIII.

HIS OWN STATE OF MIND;—INCAPABLE OF MUCH THINKING.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 12, 1780

SUCH nights as I frequently spend, are but a miserable prelude to the succeeding days, and indispose me, above all things, to the business of writing. Yet with a pen in my hand, if I am able to write at all, I find myself gradually relieved, and as I am glad of any employment that may serve to engage my attention, so especially I am pleased with an opportunity of conversing with you, though it be but upon paper. This occupation above all others assists me in that self-deception to which I am indebted for all the little comfort I enjoy, things seem to be as they were, and I almost forget that they never can be so again.

We are both obliged to you for a sight of Mr ——'s letter. The friendly and obliging manner of it will much enhance the difficulty of answering it. I think I can see plainly that though he does not hope for your applause, he would gladly escape your censure. He seems to approach you smoothly and softly, and to take you gently by the hand, as if he bespoke your lenity, and entreated you at least to spare him. You have such skill in the management of your pen, that I doubt not you will be able to send him a balmy reproof that shall give him no reason to complain of a broken head.—How delusive is the wildest speculation when pursued with eagerness, and nourished with such arguments as the perverted ingenuity of such a mind as his can easily furnish!—Judgment falls asleep upon the bench, while Imagination, like a smug, pert counsellor, stands chattering at the bar, and with a deal of fine-spun, enchanting sophistry, carries all before him.

If I had strength of mind, I have not strength of body for the task which, you say, some would impose upon me. I

cannot bear much thinking The meshes of that fine network, the brain, are composed of such mere spinners' threads in me, that when a long thought finds its way into them, it buzzes, and twangs, and bustles about at such a rate as seems to threaten the whole contexture.—No.—I must needs refer it again to you.

My enigma will probably find you out, and you will find out my enigma at some future time. I am not in a humour to transcribe it now Indeed I wonder that a sportive thought should ever knock at the door of my intellects, and still more that it should gain admittance. It is as if harlequin should intrude himself into the gloomy chamber where a corpse is deposited in state His antic gesticulations would be unseasonable at any rate, but more especially so if they should distort the features of the mournful attendants into laughter But the mind long wearied with the sameness of a dull, dreary prospect, will gladly fix its eyes on any thing that may make a little variety in its contemplations, though it were but a kitten playing with her tail.

You would believe, though I did not say it at the end of every letter, that we remember you and Mrs Newton with the same affection as ever ; but I would not therefore excuse myself from writing what it gives you pleasure to read I have often wished indeed, when writing to an ordinary correspondent, for the revival of the Roman custom—*salutem* at top, and *vale* at bottom. But as the French have taught all Europe to enter a room and to leave it with a most ceremonious bow, so they have taught us to begin and conclude our letters in the same manner. However I can say to you, *Sans ceremonie !*

Adieu, *mon ami !*

WM. COWPER.

CXIX.

**ON HIS OWN ADVANCING IN YEARS—RIOTS—HIS
FORMER TACITURNITY.**

TO MRS. COWPER, PARK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE

. MY DEAR COUSIN,

July 20, 1780

MR. NEWTON having desired me to be of the party, I am come to meet him. You see me sixteen years older, at the

least, than when I saw you last, but the effects of time seem to have taken place rather on the outside of my head than within it. What was brown is become gray, but what was foolish remains foolish still. Green fruit must rot before it ripens, if the season is such as to afford it nothing but cold winds and dark clouds, that interrupt every ray of sunshine. My days steal away silently, and march on (as poor mad King Lear would have made his soldiers march) as if they were shod with felt, not so silently but that I hear them, yet were it not that I am always listening to their flight, having no infirmity that I had not when I was much younger, I should deceive myself with an imagination that I am still young.

I am fond of writing as an amusement but do not always find it one. Being rather scantily furnished with subjects that are good for anything, and corresponding only with those who have no relish for such as are good for nothing, I often find myself reduced to the necessity, the disagreeable necessity of writing about myself. This does not mend the matter much, for though in a description of my own condition, I discover abundant materials to employ my pen upon, yet as the task is not very agreeable to *me*, so I am sufficiently aware that it is likely to prove irksome to others. A painter who should confine himself in the exercise of his art to the drawing of his own picture, must be a wonderful coxcomb, if he did not soon grow sick of his occupation, and be peculiarly fortunate, if he did not make others as sick as himself.

Remote as your dwelling is from the late scene of riot and confusion, I hope that though you could not but hear the report, you heard no more, and that the roarings of the mad multitude did not reach you. That was a day of terror to the innocent, and the present is a day of still greater terror to the guilty. The law was for a few moments like an arrow in the quiver, seemed to be of no use, and did no execution, now it is an arrow upon the string, and many, who despised it lately, are trembling as they stand before the point of it.

I have talked more already than I have formerly done in three visits,—you remember my taciturnity never to be for-

gotten by those who knew me Not to depart entirely from what might be, for aught I know, the most shining part of my character, I here shut my mouth, make my bow, and return to Olney.

W. C.

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CXX.

**BREAKING SILENCE—LAWSUIT CONCERNING
OLNEY BRIDGE**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 27, 1780.

As two men sit silent, after having exhausted all their topics of conversation, one says—"It is very fine weather,"—and the other says—"Yes,"—one blows his nose, and the other rubs the eyebrows, (by the way, this is very much in Homer's manner), such seems to be the case between you and me. After a silence of some days, I wrote you a long something, that (I suppose) was nothing to the purpose, because it had not afforded you materials for an answer. Nevertheless, as it often happens in the case above-stated, one of the distressed parties, being deeply sensible of the awkwardness of a dumb duet, breaks silence again, and resolves to speak, though he has nothing to say. So it fares with me, I am with you again in the form of a epistle, though considering my present emptiness, I have reason to fear that your only joy upon the occasion will be, that it is conveyed to you in a frank.

When I began, I expected no interruption. But if I had expected interruptions without end, I should have been less disappointed. First came the barber, who, after having embellished the outside of my head, has left the inside just as unfurnished as he found it. Then came Olney bridge, - not into the house, but into the conversation. The cause relating to it was tried on Tuesday at Puckingham. The judge directed the jury to find a verdict favorable to Olney. The jury consisted of one knave and eleven fools. The last-mentioned followed the afore-mentioned, as sheep follow a bell-wether, and decided in direct opposition to the said judge. Then a flaw was discovered in the indictment. The indictment was quashed, and an order made for a new trial. The new trial will be in the King's Bench, where said knave and

said fools will have nothing to do with it. So the men of Olney fling up their caps, and assure themselves of a complete victory. A victory will save me and your mother many shillings, perhaps some pounds, which except that it has afforded me a subject to write upon, was the only reason why I have said so much about it. I know you take an interest in all that concerns us, and will consequently rejoice with us in the prospect of an event in which we are concerned so nearly

Yours affectionately, W. C.

CXXI.

WHY HE SENDS HIS TRIFLES IN VERSE TO MR.

UNWIN RATHER THAN TO HIM—A RIDDLE

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR SIR,

July 30, 1780

You may think perhaps that I deal more liberally with Mr. Unwin, in the way of poetical export than I do with you, and I believe you have reason. the truth is this,—If I walked the streets with a fiddle under my arm, I should never think of performing before the window of a Privy Counsellor, or a Chief Justice, but should rather make free with ears more likely to be open to such amusement. The trifles I produce in this way are indeed such trifles, that I cannot think them seasonable presents for you. Mr. Unwin himself would not be offended if I was to tell him that there is this difference between him and Mr. Newton, that the latter is already an apostle, while he himself is only undergoing the business of an incubation, with a hope that he may be hatched in time. When my Muse comes forth arrayed in sables, at least in a robe of graver cast, I make no scruple to direct her to my friend at Hoxton. This has been one reason why I have so long delayed the riddle. But lest I should seem to set a value upon it, that I do not, by making it an object of still further inquiry, here it comes

I am just two and two, I am warm, I am cold,
And the parent of numbers that cannot be told ;
I am lawful, unlawful—a duty, a fault ;
I am often sold dear, good for nothing when bought,
An extraordinary boon, and a matter of course,
And yield with pleasure—when taken by force.

W. C.

CXXII.

**WRITING UPON ANY THING—HUMAN NATURE
CONTINUES THE SAME, THOUGH FASHIONS
CHANGE**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

August 6, 1780

You like to hear from me : this is a very good reason why I should write —But I have nothing to say · this seems equally a good reason why I should not Yet if you had alighted from your horse at our door this morning, and at this present writing, being five o'clock in the afternoon, had found occasion to say to me—"Mr Cowper, you have not spoke since I came in ; have you resolved never to speak again ?" it would be but a poor reply, if in answer to the summons I should plead inability as my best and only excuse. And this by the way suggests to me a seasonable piece of instruction, and reminds me of what I am very apt to forget, when I have any epistolary business in hand, that a letter may be written upon any thing or nothing just as that any thing or nothing happens to occur A man that has a journey before him twenty miles in length, which he is to perform on foot, will not hesitate and doubt whether he shall set out or not, because he does not readily conceive how he shall ever reach the end of it for he knows, that by the simple operation of moving one foot forward first, and then the other, he shall be sure to accomplish it So it is in the present case, and so it is in every similar case A letter is written as a conversation is maintained, or a journey performed , not by preconcerted or premeditated means, a new contrivance, or an invention never heard of before,—but merely by maintaining a progress, and resolving as a postilion does, having once set out, never to stop till we reach the appointed end If a man may talk without thinking, why may he not write upon the same terms ? A grave gentleman of the last century, a tie-wig, square-toe, Steinkirk figure, would say—"My good sir, a man has no right to do either " But it is to be hoped that the present century has nothing to do with the mouldy opinions of the last , and so good Sir Launcelot,

or Sir* Paul, or whatever be your name, step into your picture frame again, and look as if you thought for another century, and leave us moderns in the mean time to think when we can, and to write whether we can or not, else we might as well be dead as you are

When we look back upon our forefathers, we seem to look back upon the people of another nation, almost upon creatures of another nation almost upon creatures of another species. Their vast rambling mansions, spacious halls, and painted casements, the gothic porch smothered with honeysuckles, their little gardens and high walls, their boxedgings, balls of holly, and yew-tree statues, are become so entirely unfashionable now, that we can hardly believe it possible, that a people who resembled us so little in their taste, should resemble us in any thing else. But in every thing else, I suppose, they were our counterparts exactly, and time, that has sewed up the slashed sleeve, and reduced the large trunk hose to a neat pair of silk stockings, has left human nature just where it found it. The inside of the man at least has undergone no change. His passions, appetites, and aims, are just what they ever were. They wear perhaps a handsomer disguise than they did in days of yore, for philosophy and literature will have their effect upon the exterior, but in every other respect a modern is only an ancient in a different dress.

W C

CXXIII.

**GREETING HIM AT HIS CASTLE OF BUEN RETIRO,
AND REMINDING HIM OF DAYS WHEN HE WAS
LESS BUSILY EMPLOYED.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR SIR,

Aug 10, 1780

I GREET you at your castle of Buen Retiro, and wish you could enjoy the unmixed pleasures of the country there. But it seems you are obliged to dash the cup with a portion

* A whimsical blunder in one edition of Cowper's works has converted this into *St. Paul*.

of those bitters you are always swallowing in town Well—you are honourably and usefully employed, and ten times more beneficially to society, than if you were piping to a few sheep under a spreading beech, or listening to a tinkling rill. Besides, by the effect of long custom and habitual practice, you are not only enabled to endure your occupation, but even find it agreeable I remember the time when it would not have suited you so well, to have devoted so large a part of your vacation to the objects of your profession, and you, I dare say, have not forgot what a seasonable relaxation you found, when, lying at full stretch upon the ruins of an old wall, by the sea-side, you amused yourself with Tasso's Jerusalem, and the Pastor Fido. I recollect that we both pitied Mr. De Grey, when we called at his cottage at Taplow, and found, not the master indeed, but his desk, with his white-leaved folio upon it, which bespoke him as much a man of business in his retirement as in Westminster Hall But by these steps he ascended the Bench Now he may read what he pleases, and ride where he will, if the gout will give him leave And you who have no gout, and probably never will, when your hour of dismission comes, will, for that reason, if for no other, be a happier man than he

I am, my dear friend,

affectionately yours,

WM COWPER.

P S Mr —has not thought proper to favour me with his book, and having no interest in the subject, I have not thought proper to purchase it Indeed I have no curiosity to read what I am sure must be erroneous before I read it Truth is worth every thing that can be given for it, but a mere display of ingenuity, calculated only to mislead, is worth nothing.

CXXIV.

ESCAPE OF ONE OF HIS HARES.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

August 21, 1780

THE following occurrence ought not to be passed over in silence, in a place where so few notable ones are to be met

with Last Wednesday night, while we were at supper, between the hours of eight and nine, I heard an unusual noise in the back parlour, as if one of the hares was entangled, and endeavouring to disengage herself. I was just going to rise from table, when it ceased. In about five minutes a voice on the outside of the parlour door inquired if one of my hares had got away. I immediately rushed into the next room, and found that my poor favourite Puss had made her escape. She had gnawed in sunder the strings of a lattice work, with which I thought I had sufficiently secured the window, and which I preferred to any other sort of blind, because it admitted plenty of air. From thence I hastened to the kitchen, where I saw the redoubtable Thomas Freeman, who told me, that having seen her, just after she had dropped into the street, he attempted to cover her with his hat, but she screamed out, and leaped directly over his head. I then desired him to pursue as fast as possible, and added Richard Coleman to the chase, as being nimble, and carrying less weight than Thomas; not expecting to see her again, but desirous to learn, if possible, what became of her. In something less than an hour, Richard returned, almost breathless, with the following account. That soon after he began to run, he left Tom behind him, and came in sight of a most numerous hunt of men, women, children, and dogs, that he did his best to keep back the dogs, and presently outstripped the crowd, so that the race was at last disputed between himself and Puss,—she ran right through the town, and down the lane that leads to Dropshort; a little before she came to the house, he got the start and turned her; she pushed for the town again, and soon after she entered it, sought shelter in Mr. Wagstaff's tanyard, adjoining to old Mr. Drake's. Sturges's harvest men were at supper, and saw her from the opposite side of the way. There she encountered the tan-pits full of water; and while she was struggling out of one pit, and plunging into another, and almost drowned, one of the men drew her out by the ears, and secured her. She was then well washed in a bucket to get the lime out of her coat, and brought home in a sack at ten o'clock.

This frolic cost us four shillings, but you may believe we

did not grudge a farthing of it. The poor creature received only a little hurt in one of her claws, and in one of her ears, and is now almost as well as ever.

I do not call this an answer to your letter, but such as is I send it, presuming upon that interest which I know you take in my minutest concerns, which I cannot express better than in the words of Terence a little varied—*Nihil rei a te alienum putas.* Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

CXXV.

**LADY COWPER'S DEATH—EFFECTS OF AGE—
SEPARATION FROM HIS KINDRED.**

TO MRS. COWPER, PARK STREET, GROSVENOR SQUARE.

MY DEAR COUSIN,

August 31, 1780.

I AM obliged to you for your long letter, which did not seem so ; and for your short one, which was more than I had any reason to expect. Short as it was, it conveyed to me two interesting articles of intelligence. An account of your recovering from a fever, and of Lady Cowper's death. The latter was, I suppose, to be expected, for by what remembrance I have of her ladyship, who was never much acquainted with her, she had reached those years that are always found upon the borders of another world. As for you, your time of life is comparatively of a youthful date. You may think of death as much as you please, (you cannot think of it too much), but I hope you will live to think of it many years.

It costs me not much difficulty to suppose that my friends who were already grown old when I saw them last, are old still, but it costs me a good deal sometimes to think of those who were at that time young, as being older than they were. Not having been an eye-witness of the change that time has made in them, and my former idea of them not being corrected by observation, it remains the same ; my memory presents me with this image unimpaired, and while it retains the resemblance of what they were, forgets that by this time the picture may have lost much of its likeness, through the

alteration that succeeding years have made in the original. I know not what impressions Time may have made upon your person, for while his claws, (as our grannams called them) strike deep furrows in some faces, he seems to sheath them with much tenderness, as if fearful of doing injury to others. But though an enemy to the person, he is a friend to the mind, and you have found him so. Though even in this respect his treatment of us depends upon what he meets with at our hands, if we use him well, and listen to his admonitions, he is a friend indeed, but otherwise the worst of enemies, who takes from us daily something that we valued, and gives us nothing better in its stead. It is well with them who, like you, can stand a tiptoe on the mountain top of human life, look down with pleasure upon the valley they have passed, and sometimes stretch their wings in joyful hope of a happy flight into eternity. Yet a little while, and your hope will be accomplished.

When you can favour me with a little account of your own family, without inconvenience, I shall be glad to receive it, for though separated from my kindred by little more than half a century of miles, I know as little of their concerns as if oceans and continents were interposed between us.

Yours, my dear cousin, W C

CXXVI

**BIOGRAPHIA BRITANNICA—COMMISSION FOR
BOOKS**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 3, 1780

I AM glad you are so provident, and that, while you are yet young, you have furnished yourself with the means of comfort in old age. Your crutch and your pipe may be of use to you, (and may they be so,) should your years be extended to an antediluvian date; and for your present accommodation, you seem to want nothing but a clerk called Snuffle, and a sexton of the name Skeleton, to make your ministerial equipage complete.

I think I have read as much of the first volume of the *Biographia* as I shall ever read. I find it very amusing, more so perhaps than it would have been had they sifted their characters with more exactness, and admitted none but those who had in some way or other entitled themselves to immortality, by deserving well of the public. Such a compilation would perhaps have been more judicious, though I confess it would have afforded less variety. The priests and the monks of earlier, and the doctors of later days, who have signalized themselves by nothing but a controversial pamphlet, long since thrown by, and never to be perused again, might have been forgotten, without injury or loss to the national character for learning or genius. This observation suggested to me the following lines, which may serve to illustrate my meaning, and at the same time to give my criticism a sprightlier air.

Oh fond attempt, to give a deathless lot
To names ignoble, born to be forgot !
In vain, recorded in historic page,
They court the notice of a future age ;
Those twinkling, tiny lustres of the land
Drop one by one, from Fame's neglecting hand ;
Lethæan gulfs receive them as they fall,
And dark oblivion soon absorbs them all
So when a child (as playful children use)
Has burnt to cinder a stale last year's news,
The flame extinct, he views the roving fire,
There goes my lady, and there goes the squire,
There goes the parson—O illustrious spark !
And there—scarce less illustrious—goes the clerk !

Virgil admits none but worthies into the Elysian Fields, I cannot recollect the lines in which he describes them all, but these in particular I well remember—

*Quisque sui memores alios facere merendo,
Inventas aut qui vitam excoluere per artes*

A chaste and scrupulous conduct like his would well become the writer of national biography. But enough of this.

Our respects attend Miss Shuttleworth, with many thanks for her intended present. Some purses derive all their value from their contents, but these will have an intrinsic value of their own. and though mine* should be often

empty, which is not an improbable supposition, I shall still esteem it highly on its own account

If you could meet with a second-hand Virgil, ditto Homer, both Iliad and Odyssey, together with a Clavis, for I have no Lexicon, and all tolerably cheap, I shall be obliged to you if you will make the purchase.

Yours,

W. C.

CXXXVII

EARLY EDUCATION.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 7, 1780.

As many gentlemen as there are in the world, who have children, and heads capable of reflecting on the important subject of their education, so many opinions there are about it, many of them just and sensible, though almost all differing from each other. With respect to the education of boys, I think they are generally made to draw in Latin and Greek trammels too soon. It is pleasing, no doubt, to a parent, to see his child already in some sort a proficient in those languages, at an age when most others are entirely ignorant of them; but hence it often happens, that a boy, who would construe a fable in *Æsop* at six or seven years of age, having exhausted his little stock of attention and diligence in making that notable acquisition grows weary of his task, conceives a dislike for study, and perhaps makes but a very indifferent progress afterwards. The mind and the body have in this respect a striking resemblance of each other. In childhood they are both nimble, but not strong, they can skip and frisk about with wonderful agility, but hard labour spoils them both. In maturer years they become less active, but more vigorous, more capable of a fixed application, and can make themselves sport with that which a little earlier would have affected them with intolerable fatigue. I should recommend it to you therefore,—(but after all you must judge for yourself,) to allot the two next years of little John's scholarship to writing and arithmetic, together with which, for variety's sake, and because it is capable

of being formed into an amusement, I would mingle geography, a science (which, if not attended to betimes, is seldom made an object of much consideration) essentially necessary to the accomplishment of a gentleman, yet (as I know by sad experience) imperfectly, if at all, inculcated in the schools Lord Spencer's son, when he was four years of age, knew the situation of every kingdom, country, city, river, and remarkable mountain in the world For this attainment, which I suppose his father had never made he was indebted to a plaything, having been accustomed to amuse himself with those maps which are cut into several compartments, so as to be thrown into a heap of confusion, that they may be put together again with an exact coincidence of all their angles and bearings, so as to form a perfect whole

If he begins Latin and Greek at eight, or even at nine years of age, it is surely soon enough Seven years, the usual allowance for those acquisitions, are more than sufficient for the purpose, especially with his readiness in learning, for you would hardly wish to have him qualified for the university before fifteen, a period, in my mind, much too early for it, and when he could hardly be trusted there without the utmost danger to his morals Upon the whole, you will perceive that in my judgment the difficulty, as well as the wisdom, consists more in bridling in, and keeping back, a boy of his parts, than in pushing him forward If therefore, at the end of the two next years, instead of putting a grammar into his hand, you should allow him to amuse himself with some agreeable writers upon the subject of natural philosophy for another year, I think it would answer well There is a book called *Cosmotheoria Puerilis*, there are Derham's *Physico*, and *Astro-theology*, together with several others, in the same manner, very intelligible even to a child, and full of useful instruction.

Plums and pears in my next.

W. C

CXXVIII.
SCHOOLS

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 17, 1780.

YOU desire my further thoughts on the subject of education. I send you such as had for the most part occurred to me when I wrote last, but could not be comprised in a single letter. They are indeed on a different branch of this interesting theme, but not less important than the former.

I think it your happiness, and wish you to think it so yourself, that you are in every respect qualified for the task of instructing your son, and preparing him for the university, without committing him to the care of a stranger. In my judgment, a domestic education deserves the preference to a public one on a hundred accounts, which I have neither time nor room to mention. I shall only touch upon two or three that I cannot but consider as having a right to your most earnest attention.

In a public school, or indeed in any school, his morals are sure to be but little attended to, and his religion not at all. If he can catch the love of virtue from the fine things that are spoken of it in the classics, and the love of holiness from a customary attendance upon such preaching as he is likely to hear, it will be well, but I am sure you have had too many opportunities to observe the inefficacy of such means, to expect any such advantage from them. In the mean time, the more powerful influence of bad example, and perhaps bad company, will continually counterwork these only preservatives he can meet with, and may possibly send him home to you, at the end of five or six years, such as you will be sorry to see him. You escaped indeed the contagion yourself, but a few instances of happy exemption from a general malady are no sufficient warrant to conclude, that it is therefore not infectious, or may be encountered without danger.

You have seen too much of the world, and are a man of too much reflection, not to have observed that in proportion as the sons of a family approach to years of maturity, they lose a sense of obligation to their parents, and seem

at last almost divested of that tender affection which the nearest of all relations seems to demand from them I have often observed it myself, and have always thought I could sufficiently account for it, without laying all the blame upon the children. While they continue in their parents' house, they are every day obliged, and every day reminded how much it is their interest, as well as duty, to be obliging and affectionate in return. But at eight or nine years of age the boy goes to school. From that moment he becomes a stranger in his father's house. The course of parental kindness is intercepted. The smiles of his mother, the tender admonitions, and the solicitous care of both his parents, are no longer before his eyes. Year after year he feels himself more and more detached from them, till at last he is so effectually weaned from the connexion, as to find himself happier any where than in their company.

I should have been glad of a frank for this letter, for I have said but little of what I could say upon the subject, and perhaps I may not be able to catch it by the end again. If I can, I shall add to it hereafter.

The Breda is the best late apricot, and the *Empress* or *Imperatrice* plum is that which your mother principally recommends. It turns to a fine dried sweetmeat upon the tree, but must not be gathered sooner. Yours, W. C.

CXXIX

PUBLIC SCHOOLS—SCHOOL FRIENDSHIPS

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct 3, 1780

Now for the sequel. You have anticipated one of my arguments in favour of a private education, therefore I need say but little about it. The folly of supposing that the mother tongue, in some respects the most difficult of all tongues, may be acquired without a teacher, is predominant in all the public schools that I have ever heard of. To pronounce it well, to speak and to write it with fluency and elegance, are no easy attainments, not one in fifty of those who pass through Westminster and Eton, arrive at any remarkable

proficiency in these accomplishments, and they that do are more indebted to their own study and application for it, than to any instruction received there. In general, there is nothing so pedantic as the style of a schoolboy, if he aims at any style at all, and if he does not, he is of course inelegant, and perhaps ungrammatical. A defect, no doubt, in great measure owing to the want of cultivation, for the same lad that is often commended for his Latin, frequently would deserve to be whipped for his English, if the faults were not more his master's than his own. I know not where this evil is so likely to be prevented as at home,—supposing always, nevertheless (which is the case in your instance), that the boy's parents, and their acquaintance, are persons of elegance and taste themselves. For to converse with those who converse with propriety, and to be directed to such authors as have refined and improved the language by their productions, are advantages which he cannot elsewhere enjoy in an equal degree. And though it requires some time to regulate the taste, and fix the judgment, and these effects must be gradually wrought even upon the best understanding, yet I suppose much less time will be necessary for the purpose than could at first be imagined, because the opportunities of improvement are continual.

I promised to say little on this topic, and I have said so much, that if I had not a frank I must burn my letter and begin again.

A public education is often recommended as the most effectual remedy for that bashful and awkward constraint, so epidemical among the youth of your country. But I verily believe that instead of being a cure, it is often the cause of it. For seven or eight years of his life, the boy has hardly seen or conversed with a man, or a woman, except the maids at his boarding house. A gentleman or a lady are consequently such novelties to him, that he is perfectly at a loss to know what sort of behaviour he should preserve before them. He plays with his buttons, or the strings of his hat, he blows his nose and hangs down his head, is conscious of his own deficiency to a degree that makes him quite unhappy, and trembles lest any one should speak to him, because that would quite overwhelm him. Is not all this

miserable shyness evidently the effect of his education ? To me it appears to be so. If he saw good company every day, he would never be terrified at the sight of it, and a room full of ladies and gentlemen would alarm him no more than the chairs they sit on. Such is the effect of custom.

I need add nothing further on this subject, because I believe little John is as likely to be exempted from this weakness as most young gentlemen we shall meet with. He seems to have his father's spirit in this respect, in whom I could never discern the least trace of bashfulness, though I have often heard him complain of it. Under your management, and the influence of your example, I think he can hardly fail to escape it. If he does he escapes that which makes many a man uncomfortable for life, and has ruined not a few, by forcing them into mean and dishonourable company where only they could be free and cheerful.

Connections formed at school are said to be lasting and often beneficial. There are two or three stories of this kind upon record, which would not be so constantly cited as they are, whenever this subject happens to be mentioned, if the chronicle that preserves their remembrance had many besides to boast of. For my own part, I found such friendships, though warm enough in their commencement, surprisingly liable to extinction, and of seven or eight, whom I had selected for intimates out of about three hundred, in ten years time not one was left me. The truth is, that there may be, and often is an attachment of one boy to another, that looks very like a friendship, and while they are in circumstances that enable them mutually to oblige and to assist each other promises well, and bids fair to be lasting. But they are no sooner separated from each other by entering into the world at large, than other connections, and new employments, in which they no longer share together, efface the remembrance of what passed in earlier days, and they become strangers to each other for ever. Add to this, that the *man* frequently differs so much from the *boy*,—his principles, manners, temper, and conduct, undergo so great an alteration,—that we no longer recognise in him our old playfellow, but find him utterly unworthy and unfit for the place he once held in our affections.

To close this article, as I did the last, by applying myself immediately to the present concern,—little John is happily placed above all occasion for dependance upon such precarious hopes, and need not be sent to school in quest of some great man in embryo, who may possibly make his fortune.

Yours, my dear friend, W C

CXXX.

ON MR. NEWTON'S GOING TO RAMSGATE.

TO MRS NEWTON

DEAR MADAM,

Oct 5, 1780

WHEN a lady speaks, it is not civil to make her wait a week for an answer,—I received your letter within this hour, and, foreseeing that the garden will engross much of my time for some days to come, have seized the present opportunity to acknowledge it. I congratulate you on Mr Newton's safe arrival at Ramsgate, making no doubt but that he reached the place without difficulty or danger, the road thither from Canterbury being so good as to afford room for neither. He has now a view of the element, with which he was once so familiar, but which I think he has not seen for many years. The sight of his old acquaintance will revive in his mind a pleasing recollection of past deliverances, and when he looks at him from the beach, he may say—"You have formerly given me trouble enough, but I have cast anchor now where your billows can never reach me"—It is happy for him that he can say so.

Mrs Unwin returns you many thanks for your anxiety on her account. Her health is considerably mended upon the whole, so as to afford us a hope that it will be established. Our love attends you.

Yours, dear madam, W C

CXXXI.

PROPOSES A PAYMENT FOR HIS VERSES.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

Nov 8, 1780

I WROTE the following last summer. The tragical occasion of it really happened at the next house to ours. I am

glad when I can find a subject to work upon, a lapidary I suppose accounts it a laborious part of his business to rub away the roughness of the stone, but it is my amusement, and if after all the polishing I can give it, it discovers some little lustre, I think myself well rewarded for my pains *

I shall charge you a half penny a-piece for every copy I send you, the short as well as the long This is a sort of afterclap you little expected, but I cannot possibly afford them at a cheaper rate If this method of raising money had occurred to me sooner, I should have made the bargain sooner; but am glad I have hit upon it at last It will be a considerable encouragement to my muse, and act as a powerful stimulus to my industry If the American war should last much longer, I may be obliged to raise my price; but this I shall not do without a real occasion for it—it depends much upon Lord North's pretty conduct in the article of supplies If he imposes an additional tax on anything that I deal in, the necessity of this measure, on my part, will be so apparent, that I dare say you will not dispute it

Your mother desires me to add her love to mine, which waits on you all as usual She is much pleased with your desire to hear from her, but having such an industrious secretary in me, she thought it the less necessary She will use her own hand, however, when her nerves, which are seldom well strung, and which this turbulent weather particularly discomposes, will give her leave W C

CXXXII.

**ARGUING THAT THE BOOKSELLER WHO ENGAGES
TO SERVE COUNTRY CUSTOMERS, IS BOUND
TO SEND BOOKS TO THEIR ORDER.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 10, 1780

I AM sorry that the bookseller shuffles off the trouble of package upon anybody that belongs to you. I think I could cast him upon this point, in an action upon the case,

* 1 Verses on a Goldfinch starved to death in a cage.

grounded upon the terms of his own undertaking He engages to serve country customers Ergo, as it would be unreasonable to expect that when a country gentleman wants a book, he should order his chaise, and bid the man drive to Exeter Change, and as it is not probable that the book would find the way to him, of itself, though it were the wisest that ever was written, I should suppose the law would compel him. For I recollect it is a maxim of good authority in the courts, that there is no right without a remedy And if another, or a third person, should not be suffered to interpose between my right and the remedy the law gives me, where the right is invaded, much less, I apprehend, shall the man himself, who of his own mere motion gives me that right, be suffered to do it

I never made so long an argument upon a law case before I ask your pardon for doing it now You have but little need of such entertainment

Yours affectionately,

WM. COWPER.

CXXXIII

**HIS FRIEND'S LANDLADY, AND HIS EASY TEMPER.
BOTH HUMOURISTS WHO USED TO MAKE THEM-
SELVES MERRY WITH EACH OTHER'S
HUMOUR—A LEGACY.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, 18Q

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Probably Nov or Dec 1780

I THANK you much for your letter, which, without obliging me to travel to Wargrove at a time of year when journeying is not very agreeable, has introduced me in the most commodious manner to a perfect acquaintance with your neat little garden, your old cottage, and above all with your most prudent and sagacious landlady As much as I admire her, I admire much more the philosophical temper with which you seem to treat her for I know few characters more provoking, to me, at least, than the selfish, who are never honest, especially if while they determine to pick your pocket, they have not ingenuity enough to conceal their purpose. But you are perfectly in the right,

and act just as I would endeavour to do on the same occasion. You sacrifice every thing to a retreat you admire, and, if the natural indolence of my disposition did not forsake me, so would I.

You might as well apologize for sending me forty pounds as for writing about yourself. Of the two ingredients I hardly know which made your letter the most agreeable—(observe, I do not say the most acceptable.) The draft indeed was welcome, but though it was so, yet it did not make me laugh. I laughed heartily at the account you gave of yourself and your landlady, Dame Savcall, whose picture you have drawn, though not with a flattering hand, yet I dare say with a strong resemblance. As to you, I have never seen so much of you, since I was in London, where you and I so often have made ourselves merry with each other's humour, yet never gave each other a moment's pain by doing so. We are both humourists, and it is well for your wife and my Mrs. Unwin, that they have alike found out the way to deal with us.

More thanks to Mrs. Hill for her intentions. She has the true enthusiasm of a gardener, and therefore I can pity her under her disappointment, having so large a share of that commodity myself.

I am informed that Lady C. has left me an annuity of twenty pounds. I mention it merely because, as you do not, I thought you might not have heard it.

Yours, my dear Sir, affectionately, WM COWPER

Dec. 10, 1780

It is well for me that as my intelligencer with respect to Lady Cowper's legacy proved to be mistaken, the substantial part of his information is however authenticated and the money not lost, though it comes from a different mine.

CXXXIV.

MRS. UNWIN AND NEWTON CONFIDENT OF HIS DELIVERANCE FROM HIS STATE OF DESOLATION—COWPER PLEASED PRAISE AND ENCOURAGED THEREBY TO CONTINUE WRITING POETRY, WHICH HE FINDS ABOVE ALL THINGS USEFUL IN DIVERTING HIS MIND FROM SAID SUBJECTS.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

Dec 21, 1780.

I THANK you for your anecdote of Judge Carpenter. If it really happened, it is one of the best stories I ever heard, and if not, it has at least the merit of being *ben trovato*. We both very sincerely laughed at it, and think the whole Livery of London must have done the same, though I have known some persons whose faces, as if they had been cast in a mould, could never be provoked to the least alteration of a single feature, so that you might as well relate a good story to a barber's block.

Non equidem invideo, miror magis.

Your sentiments with respect to me are exactly Mrs. Unwin's. She, like you, is perfectly sure of my deliverance, and often tells me so. I make but one answer, and sometimes none at all. That answer gives *her* no pleasure, and would give *you* as little, therefore at this time I suppress it. It is better on every account that they who interest themselves so deeply in that event, should believe the certainty of it, than that they should not. It is a comfort to *them* at least, if it is none to me, and as I could not, if I would, so neither would I, if I could, deprive them of it.

I annex a long thought in verse for your perusal. It was produced about last midsummer, but I never could prevail with myself, till now, to transcribe it. You have bestowed some commendations on a certain poem now in the press, and they, I suppose, have at least animated me to the task. If human nature may be compared to a piece of tapestry, (and why not?) then human nature, as it subsists in me,

though it is sadly faded on the right side, retains all its colour on the wrong. I am pleased with commendation, and though not passionately desirous of indiscriminate praise, or what is generally called popularity, yet when a judicious friend claps me on the back, I own I find it an encouragement. At this season of the year, and in this gloomy uncomfortable climate, it is no easy matter for the owner of a mind like mine, to divert it from sad subjects, and fix it upon such as may administer to its amusement. Poetry, above all things, is useful to me in this respect. While I am held in pursuit of pretty images, or a pretty way of expressing them, I forget every thing that is irksome, and, like a boy that plays truant, determine to avail myself of the present opportunity to be amused, and to put by the disagreeable recollection that I must, after all, go home and be whipt again.

It will not be long, perhaps, before you will receive a poem called the *Progress of Error*. That will be succeeded by another, in due time, called *Truth*. Don't be alarmed. I ride Pegasus with a curb. He will never run away with me again. I have even convinced Mrs. Unwin that I can manage him, and make him stop when I please.

Yours, WM. COWPER

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CXXXV

**DECLINES WRITING UPON CERTAIN DESIRED
MEASURES OF REFORM—MR AND MRS POW-
LEY—THELYPHTHORA—MR RILAND, OF BIR-
MINGHAM—COWPER NOT A MALTHUSITE.**

TO THE REV. W. UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 21, 1780

I AM sensibly mortified at finding myself obliged to disappoint you, but though I have had many thoughts upon the subjects you propose to my consideration, I have had none that have been favourable to the undertaking. I applaud your purpose, for the sake of the principle from which it springs, but I look upon the evils you mean to animadvert upon, as too obstinate and inveterate ever to be expelled by the means you mention. The very persons to

whom you would address your remonstrance, are themselves sufficiently aware of their enormity, years ago, to my knowledge, they were frequently the topics of conversation at polite tables, they have been frequently mentioned in both houses of Parliament, and I suppose there is hardly a member of either who would not immediately assent to the necessity of a reform were it proposed to him in a reasonable way. But there it stops, and there it will for ever stop, till the majority are animated with a zeal, in which at present they are deplorably defective. A religious man is unfeignedly shocked when he reflects upon the prevalence of such crimes; a moral man must needs be so in a degree, and will affect to be much more so than he is. But how many do you suppose there are among our worthy representatives, that come under either of these descriptions, If all were such, yet to new model the police of the country, which must be done, in order to make even unavoidable perjury less frequent, were a task they would hardly undertake, on account of the great difficulty that would attend it. Government is too much interested in the consumption of malt liquor to reduce the number of vendors. Such plausible pleas may be offered in defence of travelling on Sundays, especially by the trading part of the world, as the whole bench of Bishops would find it difficult to overrule. And with respect to the violation of oaths till a certain name is more generally respected than it is at present, however such persons as yourself may be grieved at it, the legislature are never likely to lay it to heart. I do not mean, nor would by any means attempt to discourage you in so laudable an enterprise, but such is the light in which it appears to me, that I do not feel the least spark of courage, qualifying or prompting me to embark in it myself. An exhortation, therefore, written by me,—by hopeless desponding me,—would be flat, insipid, and uninteresting, and disgrace the cause, instead of serving it. If after what I have said, however, you still retain the same sentiments *Macte, esto virtute tua!* there is no body better qualified than yourself, and may your success prove that I despaired of it without a reason.

Your poor sister!—she has many good qualities, and

upon some occasions gives proof of a good understanding. but as some people have no ear for music, so she has none for humour. Well,—if she cannot laugh at our jokes, we can, however, at her mistakes, and in this way she makes us ample amends for the disappointment. Mr. Powley is much like herself, if his wife overlooks the jest, he will never be able to find it. They were neither of them born to write epigrams or ballads, and I ought to be less mortified at the coldness with which they entertain my small sallies in the way of drollery, when I reflect that if Swift himself had had no other judges, he would never have found one admirer.

It is indeed, as you observe, incumbent upon Mr. Madan to reply to the reviewer, if he means to maintain his point. But unless he means likewise to expose himself more in a second attempt, than he did even in his first, it is still more incumbent upon him to be silent. I reckon myself a competent judge of the argument, so far as the Greek criticisms are in question, and if I am, a refutation of what his antagonist has advanced against that part of his performance, is (I think) impossible. That impossibility is followed close at the heels by a conclusion not to be avoided. Syllogistically dressed, it stands thus, The Scripture is the only ground on which the doctrine of polygamy can be proved.

But it cannot be proved by Scripture.

Ergo—Not at all.

You desired me, some time since, to send you my twenty-seven answers to ditto number of queries drawn up by the Rev Mr. Riland, of Birmingham. I would have done it, if the Review had not made it entirely unnecessary. The gentleman, for whose use in particular I designed them, declined sending them to the querist at my instance, so that, immediately almost after their production, they became waste paper, and I kept no copy of them myself. The questions discovered such marks of almost childish imbecility, that I could not possibly propose to myself the acquisition of any credit by the answers. But as some men, especially weak ones, are apt to suppose themselves irrefragable and invincible in disputation, I replied to them merely to guard the poor gentleman against the pernicious effect of so sad a blunder upon an occasion of such importance.

My respects attend the family, that is to say, my affectionate ones. I heartily wish Mrs Unwin better spirits. Never be afraid of the multiplication of children, you do not make them yourself, and He that does, knows how to provide for them. Poor bare-breeched Billy, to whom your alms were yesterday so acceptable, has no desponding thoughts upon this subject, though he has now four, and considering his age, and the age of his wife, may possibly have fourteen.

Yours, my dear friend, WM COWPER

CXXXVI

SENDING HIS "REPORT OF AN ADJUDGED CASE."

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 25, 1780

WEARY with rather a long walk in the snow, I am not likely to write a very sprightly letter, or to produce any thing that may cheer this gloomy season, unless I have recourse to my pocket-book, where perhaps I may find something to transcribe,—something that was written before the sun had taken leave of our hemisphere, and when I was less fatigued than I am at present.

Happy is the man who knows just so much of the law, as to make himself a little merry now and then with the solemnity of juridical proceedings. I have heard of common law judgments before now, indeed have been present at the delivery of some, that according to my poor apprehension, while they paid the utmost respect to the letter of a statute, have departed widely from the spirit of it, and being governed entirely by the point of law, have left equity, reason, and common sense, behind them at an infinite distance. You will judge whether the following report of a case, drawn up by myself, be not a proof and illustration of this satirical assertion *

Yours affectionately, W C

*The "Report of an adjudged Case, not to be found in any of the Books," concluded this letter.

CXXXVII.

WITH THE SAME POEM—ADVANTAGES OF PUTTING LAW CASES INTO RHYME.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 1780.

POETICAL reports of law cases are not very common, yet it seems to me desirable that they should be so. Many advantages would accrue from such a measure. They would in the first place be more commodiously deposited in the memory, just as linen, grocery, or other such matters, when neatly packed, are known to occupy less room, and to lie more conveniently in trunk, chest, or box, to which they may be committed. In the next place, being divested of that infinite circumlocution, and the endless embarrassment in which they are involved by it, they would become surprisingly intelligible, in comparison with their present obscurity. And lastly, they would by this means be rendered susceptible of musical embellishment, and instead of being quoted in the courts, with that dull monotony, which is so wearisome to by-standers, frequently lulls even the judges themselves to sleep, might be rehearsed in recitative, which would have an admirable effect, in keeping the attention fixed and lively, and could not fail to disperse that heavy atmosphere of sadness and gravity, which hangs over the jurisprudence of our country. I remember many years ago, being informed by a relation of mine, who in his youth had applied himself to the study of the law, that one of his fellow students, a gentleman of sprightly parts and very respectable talents of the poetical kind, did actually engage in the prosecution of such a design, for reasons I suppose somewhat similar to, if not the same with those I have now suggested. He began with Coke's Institutes, a book so rugged in its style, that an attempt to polish it seemed an Herculean labour, and not less arduous and difficult, than it would be to give the smoothness of a rabbit's fur to the prickly back of a hedgehog. But he succeeded to admiration, as you will perceive by the following specimen, which is all that my said relation could recollect of the performance.

Tenant in fee
Simple, is he,
And need neither quake nor quiver,
Who hath his lands,
Free from all demands,
To him and his heirs for ever

You have an ear for music, and a taste for verse, which saves me the trouble of pointing out with a critical nicety the advantages of such a version. I proceed therefore to what I at first intended, and to transcribe the record of an adjudged case thus managed to which indeed what I have promised was intended merely as an introduction.* W C

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1781.

CXXXVIII.

JOHN CROSS'S RULE—THELYPHTHORA.

TO THE REV W UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan 14, 1761

I seldom write what may properly be called an answer to a letter, unless to a letter that requires an answer, but on the present occasion, being conscious that I have not spirits to enable me to make excursions on the wings of invention, I purpose to confine myself pretty much to the subject of yours. Which prudent procedure will serve the double purpose of relieving me from the toil of pumping in vain, and of convincing you that you cannot do a worse thing than to deprive me of your letters, upon an apprehension that they can afford me neither profit nor amusement.

Impressions made upon the mind in our early days are seldom entirely effaced. This is an old observation, but I shall engraft a new one upon it. Though you have a perfect recollection of John Cross's pious and wise remark, I am sadly afraid that you have never made a practical use of it, which I the more wonder at, because his unexpected good fortune in the instance you allude to, amounts almost to a proof of the great utility of such a custom. How is it

* This letter concluded with the poetical law case of "Nose, plaintiff—Eyes, defendants," before referred to.

possible, were you but properly careful to keep that part uppermost at the time of rising, that you could be plagued as you are with such a variety of misadventures?—tithes unpaid, dilapidations without end, lawsuits revived, and your curate running away from you, for the sake of a pleasanter country I dare say John Cross was exempted from all these disagreeable occurrences, he had not half your understanding, yet knew how to avoid them all by attending to the main chance in the article you hint at. He presented something more substantial than even a seven-fold shield to the arrows of ill fortune, and receiving them, if he received them at all, where they could not possibly reach his heart, went through the world insensible of the troubles with which it abounds. He clapped his hand upon you know what, and said to misfortune, Now, madam, I defy you. This you know as well as I, this therefore you should practise, and though you cannot, I suppose, boast of such a buttress as he was fenced with, yet, *pro modulo*, and according to your ability, you should make that use of it his example teaches, and the most of a little.

From Mr Madan's renewed publication, I cannot but infer that he preserves the same conduct as before he published at all. Letters of admonition, dissuasion, and exhortation, he burned unread, and has treated, I suppose, the Review with the same obstinate indifference and contempt. I the rather think so, because I am firmly persuaded he could not reply to his answerer, though it is possible his case may resemble that of a certain disputant I have heard of, who said upon a like occasion, "I am confuted, but not convinced."

Impregnable, however, as he may be to the attacks of sound reason, hacked with all the authority of sound learning, his advocates are not all, it seems, quite so stubborn as himself. Mr Riland, of Birmingham, has at last forsaken the standard of polygamy, and betaken himself to the side of Christian decorum and decency again. Mr Powley, we learn from good authority, has been instrumental in working this conversion, which does him the more honour, as he had by all accounts a very weak, though a very good man to deal with. Men that have no large share of reason them-

selves, are seldom sensible of the force of it in the hands of another.

I am informed that the reviewer is preparing an answer at large, and that the Bishop of London has likewise undertaken the task. If this be the case, *actum est de Thelyphthora*. I hear likewise that the king, having read a part of it, threw it down with indignation, and expressed his regret that there was no law by which such an author could be brought to the punishment he deserves. This is not unlikely, for, by all accounts, he is a moral man, and consequently a chaste husband, that he should view therefore such a proposal with abhorrence is natural enough.

Your mother returns her thanks to Mrs. Unwin for her letter. Our love attends you both, with Miss Shuttleworth and her little ones. The two guineas may be sent with the salmon, for which we thank you *par avance*.

If the lines of your letter could be pushed together they would not fill three sides, and if mine could be moved to the distance at which yours stand from each other, they would fill four. This, however, is not my reason for concluding, but because I am weary, therefore I add only that I am

Yours as ever

W. C.

CXXXIX

**PROGRESS OF ERROR SENT BY A PRIVATE HAND—
HE SHRINKS AT PRESENT FROM TRANSCRIBING
HIS POEM CALLED TRUTH—COSTIVE TRAVEL-
LERS—MR. BARHAM.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR SIR,

Jan. 21, 1781

I AM glad that the *Progress of Error* did not Err in its Progress, as I feared it had, and that it has reached you safe, and still more pleased that it has met with your approbation, for if it had not, I should have wished ~~it had miscarried~~, and have been sorry that the bearer's memory had served him so well upon the occasion. I knew him to be that sort of genius, which being much busy in making excursions of the imaginary kind, is not always present to its own im-

mediate concerns, much less to those of others, and having reposed the trust in him, began to regret that I had done so, when it was too late. But I did it to save a frank, and as the affair has turned out, that end was very well answered. This is committed to the hands of a less volatile person, and therefore more to be depended on.

As to the poem called *Truth*, which is already longer than its elder brother, and is yet to be lengthened by the addition of perhaps twenty lines, perhaps more, I shrink from the thought of transcribing it at present. But as there is no need to be in any hurry about it, I hope that in some rainy season, which the next month will probably bring with it, when perhaps I may be glad of employment, the undertaking will appear less formidable.

You need not withhold from us any intelligence relating to yourselves, upon an apprehension that Mr Raham has been beforehand with you upon those subjects, for he came down as costive as if you had fed him upon nothing but quinquina, and unless we engineered him with question after question, we could get nothing out of him. I have known such travellers in my time, and Mrs Newton is no stranger to one of them, who keep all their observations and discoveries to themselves, till they are extorted from them by mere dint of examination, and cross examination. He told us indeed that some visible agent supplied you every Sunday with a coach, which we were pleased with hearing; and this, I think, was the sum total of his information.

We are much concerned for Mr Barham's loss, but it is well for that gentleman, that those amiable features in his character, which most incline one to sympathise with him, are the very graces and virtues that will strengthen him to bear it with equanimity and patience. People that have neither his light nor experience, will wonder that a disaster which would perhaps have broken their hearts, is not heavy enough to make any abatement in the cheerfulness of his.

Your books came yesterday. I shall not repeat to you what I said to Mrs Unwin, after having read two or three of the letters. I admire the preface, in which you have given an air of novelty to a worn out topic, and have actually, engaged the favour of the reader by saying those things in

a delicate and uncommon way, which in general are disgusting.

I suppose you know that Mr. Scott will be in town on Tuesday. He is likely to take possession of the Vicarage at last, with the best grace possible, at least, if he and Mr. Browne can agree upon the terms. The old gentleman I find would be glad to let the house, and abridge the stipend, in other words to make a good bargain for himself, and starve his curate.

Yours, my dear friend, W^M COWPER

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CXL

CONCERNING HIS POEMS—THELYPHTHORA—
MR. SCOTT'S ARRIVAL AS CURATE

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON, CHARLES SQUARE, HOXTON
LONDON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 4, 1781

We have waited I suppose with equal impatience for a letter. Our last dispatches crossed each other, so that each of us has claimed the posteriority, the epistolary race being always won by him that comes in last. This however has not been the only reason of my silence. I have been very busy in my way, and ere long you will see the fruit of my labour. I shall say nothing of it at present, except that *Truth*, though long since finished, must be postponed to this last production, and that the Progress of Error itself must not take the lead of it. Truth will be seasonable at any time, and though the Progress of Error has some connection with the present day, it is not so closely related to the occurrences of it as the new one, which has the name of Table Talk. I have almost finished the copy of it which I intend for you, but cannot send it till from that I have transcribed another for myself, the original being written on so many scraps and scraps that it would be very troublesome to range them, and indeed I have no perfect copy of it but the fair one. I have not numbered the lines, but I suspect that it is longer than either of the others. Now I believe I shall hang up my harp for the remainder of the year, and,

Since Eighty-one has had so much to do,
Postpone what yet is left till Eighty two.

We were much pleased with your Extracts : they were so faithful to the truth, that unless Mr Madan has much of that candour he will not allow to others, they will put his friendship for you to a strong trial , and yet so affectionate, that he cannot be displeased without the violation of every thing that deserves the name of friendship We both long to be informed of the reception they have met with, and take it granted you will indulge our curiosity when you can We have been told that the Bishop of London intends an answer to Thelyphthora, but I think his Lordship would hardly have put off the publication to so late a day We have been told likewise that Mr. Riland is a convert to monogamy, but from some things we have heard since are obliged to doubt it.

Mr Scott called on us the very day of his return from London. We are glad of his appointment to the curacy, and so I suppose are all, at least all but a very few, whose joy or sorrow on the occasion is of small consequence to any but themselves And yet I think he will meet with troubles, and if my sagacity does not fail me much, I can see from what quarter they are likely to arise Instrumentality is generally taken up with some reluctance, and laid down with a great deal more but where such a man, so well qualified in every respect for the charge assigned him, has the care of a people, there can be no occasion for subordinate assistance It is not his design to accept of it, and his refusal I am rather apprehensive will occasion a murmur somewhere Even upon *your* account we are pleased with Mr Page's departure, as some disagreeables and awkwardnesses would probably have attended your interview He could not have refused you his pulpit, and yet there is reason to believe that you are the last man in the kingdom he would have wished to see in it He has applied, or rather Mr Warden Smith in his behalf, for the curacy at Ravenstone, but Mr. Chapman has given no definitive answer Mr Scott I should suppose, would be sorry to see himself so succeeded. Mr. Dowbiggin's curate, (if I have spelt the strange name aright,) pays addresses to the

same lady, and Mr. Jones has been ogling her not a little. But who will be the happy man, conjecture has not yet ventured to surmise.

We wait with some impatience for the issue of Lord George's trial. Somebody, late from London, has brought hither the news that fresh disturbances are expected on the occasion especially if he should be condemned but what sort of patriotism is it, or what sort of zeal, that is offended when the laws of the country take their course?

We are both pretty well Mrs Unwin joins with me in love to yourself and Mrs. Newton.

Yours, my dear Sir, Wm. COWPER

CXII. \

**ADVICE HOW TO DEAL WITH THE UNJUST AND
UNGENEROUS—POOR AT OLNEY—LORD GEORGE
GORDON'S ACQUITTAL—PITY FOR CRIMI-
NALS—WIGS.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 6, 1781.

It is high time you should consult your own peace of mind and not suffer the insatiable demands and unreasonable expectations of other men, to be a source of unhappiness to yourself. You have lived long enough in the world to know that it swarms with people who are always ready to take advantage of the generosity of such men as you; who say in their hearts, when they meet with such disinterested treatment as every one receives from your hands, "Now is the time, —the man has a gentlemanly regard for his character, he loves peace more than money, and will make any concessions, so that he may but approve himself to his own conscience. Let us squeeze him, he will yield well, the more he complies the more we will insist, and make him pay dear for the character he wishes to deserve." I cannot doubt but your predecessor's curate is of this stamp, his demand wants nothing but a cocked pistol to make it felony, without benefit of clergy

As to your proposal to the executors, if it does not give contentment, it must be for the reasons above mentioned ; in which case I would recommend it to you by all means, to pay them exactly what they can lawfully demand for glebe and tithe, and not a farthing more, and in return to insist upon every penny you lay out in necessary repairs, and not a farthing less. It is wrong not to deal liberally with persons who themselves act upon liberal and honest principles ; but it is weakness to be the willing dupe of artifice and to sacrifice one's own interest for the sake of satisfying the insatiable or unjust.

We are obliged to you for the rugs, a commodity that can never come to such a place as this at an unseasonable time. We have given one to an industrious poor widow with four children, whose sister overheard her shivering in the night, and with some difficulty brought her to confess the next morning that she was half perished for want of sufficient covering. Her said sister borrowed a rug for her at a neighbour's immediately, which she had used but one night when yours arrived. And I doubt not but we shall meet with others equally indigent, and deserving of your bounty.

I hear this morning that Lord George is acquitted. I take it for granted you was at the trial, for three reasons. First, because you was in town so lately, secondly, because you have laudable curiosity, that acts as a spur upon your spirits on all such occasions, and thirdly, because you are slender and slim, and take up so little room that you are sure of place when men of ampler dimensions are necessarily excluded. Tell us all that passed, and if he is indeed acquitted, let us know upon what point his acquittal turned, for at present I am rather at a loss to conceive how he could escape if the law was allowed to take its course, interrupted by fear and uncontrolled by a spirit of party.

Much good may your humanity do you, as it does so much good to others. You can no where find objects more entitled to your pity, than where your pity seeks them. A man whose vices and irregularities have brought his liberty and life into danger, will always be viewed with an eye of compassion by those who understand what human nature is made of. And

while we acknowledge the severity of the law to be found upon principles of necessity and justice, and are glad that there is such a barrier provided for the peace of society, if we consider that the difference between ourselves and the culprit is not of our own making, we shall be, as you are, tenderly affected with the view of his misery, and not the less so because he has brought it upon himself. I look upon the worst man in Chelmsford gaol with a more favourable eye than upon——, who claims a servant's wages from one who never was his master

What goes before was written in the morning. This evening I have read the trial as related in the General Evening, and can only add to what I said before in the words of Horace

——*Miror quo facto judicium illud
Fugerit.*

I give you joy of your own hair No doubt you are a considerable gainer in your appearance by being disperiwigged The best wig is that which most resembles the natural hair, why then should he that has hair enough of his own, have recourse to imitation? I have little doubt, but that if an arm or a leg could have been taken off with as little pain as attends the amputation of a curl or a lock of hair, the natural limb would have been thought less becoming, or less convenient, by some men, than a wooden one, and been disposed of accordingly

Thanks for the salmon, it was perfectly good, as were the two lobsters, and the two guineas came safe Having some verses to transcribe, and being rather weary, I add no more, except our love to the whole family, jointly and severally Having begun my letter with a miserable pen, I was not willing to change it for a better lest my writing should not be all of a piece, but it has worn me and my patience quite out

Yours ever,

WM. COWPER.

CXLII.

METRICAL LAW CASES—OLD AGE

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb. 15, 1781

I AM glad you were pleased with my report of so extraordinary a case. If the thought of versifying the decisions of our courts of justice had struck me, while I had the honour to attend them, it would perhaps have been no difficult matter to have compiled a volume of such amusing and interesting precedents, which, if they wanted the eloquence of the Greek or Roman oratory, would have amply compensated that deficiency by the harmony of rhyme and metre.

Your account of my Uncle and your Mother gave me great pleasure. I have long been afraid to inquire after some in whose welfare I always feel myself interested, lest the question should produce a painful answer. Longevity is the lot of so few, and is so seldom rendered comfortable by the associations of good health and good spirits, that I could not very reasonably suppose either your relations or mine so happy in those respects, as it seems they are. May they continue to enjoy those blessings so long as the date of life shall last. I do not think that in these costermonger days, as I have a notion Falstaff calls them, an antediluvian age is at all a desirable thing, but to live comfortably, while we do live, is a great matter, and comprehends in it every thing that can be wished for on this side the curtain that hangs between Time and Eternity.

Farewell my better friend than any I have to boast of either among the lords, or gentlemen of the House of Commons.

Yours ever,

W C

CXLI.III.

GREAT HURRICANE IN THE WEST INDIES—THE CONSUMMATION OF ALL THINGS POSSIBLY**AT HAND.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 15, 1781

It is possible that Mrs. Hill may not be herself a sufferer by the late terrible catastrophe in the Islands, but I

should suppose by her correspondence with those parts, she may be connected with some that are In either case, I condole with her, for it is reasonable to imagine that since the first tour that Columbus made into the Western world, it never before experienced such a convulsion; perhaps never since the foundation of the globe. You say the state grows old, and discovers many symptoms of decline. A writer, possessed of a genius for hypothesis, like that of Burnet, might construct a plausible argument to prove that the world itself is in a state of superannuation, if there be such a world. If not, there must be such a one as superannuity. When that just equilibrium that has hitherto supported all things, seems to fail, when the elements burst the chain that has bound them, the wind sweeping away the works of man, and man himself together with his works, and the ocean seeming to overleap the command, "Hitherto shalt thou come, and no further, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed," these irregular and prodigious vagaries seem to bespeak a decay, and forebode, perhaps, not a very distant dissolution. This thought has so run away with my attention, that I have left myself no room for the little politics that have only Great Britain for their object. Who knows but that while a thousand, and ten thousand tongues are employed in adjusting the scale of our national concerns, in complaining of new taxes, and funds loaded with a debt of accumulating millions, the consummation of all things may discharge it in a moment, and the scene of all this bustle disappear, as if it had never been? Charles Fox would say perhaps, he thought it very unlikely. I question if he could prove even that. I am sure, however, he could not prove it to be impossible.

Yours,

WM. COWPER.

CXLIV.

CHARACTER OF HIS VOLUME—MR. NEWTON'S OBJECTION TO COARSE EPITHETS—MR (AFTERWARDS SIR RICHARD) HILL'S ANSWER TO MR. MADAN—OLNEY—RELIGIOUS MEETINGS—REFLECTIONS ON HIS PAST LIFE

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 18, 1781

I SEND you *Table Talk* It is a medley of many things, some that may be useful, and some that, for aught I know, may be very diverting I am merry that I may decoy people into my company, and grave that they may be the better for it Now and then I put on the garb of a philosopher, and take the opportunity that disguise procures me, to drop a word in favour of religion In short, there is some froth, and here and there a bit of sweet-meat, which seems to entitle it justly to the name of a certain dish the ladies call a *trifle* I did not choose to be more factious, lest I should consult the taste of my readers at the expense of my own approbation, nor more serious than I have been, lest I should forfeit theirs A poet in my circumstances has a difficult part to act one minute obliged to bridle his humour, if he has any, and the next, to clap a spur to the sides of it now ready to weep from a sense of the importance of his subject, and on a sudden constrained to laugh, lest his gravity should be mistaken for dulness If this be not violent exercise for the mind, I know not what is, and if any man doubt it, let him try Whether all this management and contrivance be necessary, I do not know, but am inclined to suspect that if my Muse was to go forth clad in Quaker colour, without one bit of riband to enliven her appearance, she might walk from one end of London to the other, as little noticed as if she were one of the sisterhood indeed

As to the word you mention, I a little suspected that you would object to it, though I really thought that a book which cannot be supposed to have been written under a blessing, and that has certainly carried mischief

with it into many families, deserved an epithet as harsh as that which I had given it. It is a bargain however that I have made with my lady Muse, never to defend. or strickle for any thing that you object to. So the line may stand if you please thus,

Abhorr'd Thelyphthora, &c.

—you will meet with the obnoxious word again, in the copy I send you now, but coupled with a substantive of so filthy a character, that I persuade myself you will have no objection to the use of it in such a connexion. I am no friend to the use of words taken from what an uncle of mine called the diabolical dictionary, but it happens sometimes that a coarse expression is almost necessary, to do justice to the indignation excited by an abominable subject. I am obliged to you, however, for your opinion; and though poetry is apt to betray one into a warmth that one is not sensible of in writing prose, shall always desire to be set down by it.

We are glad that so able a writer as Mr Hill has taken up the cudgels. He is old enough to know how to reason with precision, and young enough to do it with fire and spirit. In conflicting with a disputant like Mr Madan, I should suppose these two qualifications almost equally necessary. A writer like him, who knows how to get the laugh on his side, would be pretty secure of having the world on his side, too, if his adversary had no skill in the use of the same weapon. It is such a merry world that Truth herself seems to want one of her principal recommendations, unless she will now and then condescend to the prevailing temper of her hearers. But you say you think it will do and therefore I have no doubt of it.

Mr Scott told Mr Wilson yesterday or the day before, that he had again asked Mr Raban whether or not he intended to continue his speaking, and that Mr Raban would give him no determinate answer. This I had from Mr Wilson himself. It will be well if that business ends peaceably. No thing could be more tenderly cogent than your letter to his colleague, and he, for aught I know, may be properly influenced by it, but it seems plain that either the before-mentioned had not seen it, or that if he had, he

had not felt it.—Geary Ball has lost his wife. She was buried on Thursday, having left her friends a comfortable hope of her welfare.

You had been married thirty-one years last Monday. When you married I was eighteen years of age, and had just left Westminster school. At that time, I valued a man according to his proficiency and taste in classical literature, and had the meanest opinion of all other accomplishments unaccompanied by that. I lived to see the vanity of what I had made my pride, and in a few years found that there were other attainments which would carry a man more handsomely through life, than a mere knowledge of what Homer and Virgil had left behind them. In measure, as my attachment to these gentry wore off, I found a more welcome reception among those whose acquaintance it was more my interest to cultivate. But all this time was spent in painting a piece of wood, that had no life in it. At last I began to think *indeed* I found myself in possession of many baubles, but not one grain of solidity in all my treasures. Then I learned the truth, and then I lost it, and there ends my history. I would no more than you wish to leave such a life over again, but for one reason. He that is carried to execution, though through the roughest road, when he arrives at the destined spot, would be glad, notwithstanding the many jolts he met with, to repeat his journey.

Yours, my dear Sir, with our joint love, W C

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CXIV.

**DIFFICULTY OF WRITING TO A LADY WHOM HE
HAS NEVER SEEN—THANKS FOR SEEDS AND
FOR FISH—LEAVES GATHERED AT THE FALL
HOLD THEIR HEAT MUCH LONGER THAN BARK,
AND ARE PREFERABLE IN EVERY RESPECT.**

TO MRS HILL.

DEAR MADAM,

Feb 19, 1781.

WHEN a man, especially a man that lives altogether in the country, undertakes to write to a lady he never saw, he is the awkwardest creature in the world. He begins his letter under the same sensations he would have, if he were to at

cost her in person, only with this difference,—that he may take as much time as he pleases, for consideration, and need not write a single word that he has not well weighed and pondered before-hand, much less a sentence that he does not think super-eminently clever. In every other respect, whether he be engaged in an interview, or in a letter, his behaviour is, for the most part, equally constrained and unnatural. He resolves, as they say, to set the best leg foremost, which often proves to be what Hudibras calls—

—————Not that of bone,
But much its better —th' wooden one

His extraordinary effort only serves, as in the case of that hero, to throw him on the other side of his horse, and he owes his want of success, if not to absolute stupidity, to his most earnest endeavour to secure it.

Now I do assure you, Madam, that all these sprightly effusions of mine stand entirely clear of the charge of pre-meditation, and that I never entered upon a business of this kind with more simplicity in my life. I determined, before I began, to lay aside all attempts of the kind I have just mentioned, and being perfectly free from the fetters that self-conceit, commonly called bashfulness, fastens upon the mind, am, as you see, surprisingly brilliant.

My principal design is to thank you in the plainest terms, which always afford the best proof of a man's sincerity, for your obliging present. The seeds will make a figure hereafter in the stove of a much greater man than myself, who am a little man, with no stove at all. Some of them, however, I shall raise for my own amusement, and keep them, as long as they can be kept, in a bark heat, which I give them all the year, and in exchange for those I part with, I shall receive such exotics as are not too delicate for a greenhouse.

I will not omit to tell you what, no doubt, you have heard already, though, perhaps, you have never made the experiment, that leaves gathered at the fall are found to hold their heat much longer than bark, and are preferable in every respect. Next year I intend to use them myself, I mention it because Mr Hill told me, sometime since that he was building a stove, in which, I suppose, they will succeed much better than in a frame.

I beg to thank you again. Madam, for the very fine salmon you was so kind as to favour me with, which has all the sweetness of a Hertfordshire trout, and resembles it so much in flavour, that, blindfold, I should not have known the difference.

I beg, Madam, you will accept all these thanks, and believe them as sincere as they really are. Mr Hill knows me well enough to be able to vouch for me, that I am not over-much addicted to compliments and fine speeches; nor do I mean either the one or the other, when I assure you that I am, dear Madam, not merely for his sake, but your own

Your most obedient and affectionate servant.

WM COWPER.

CXI.VI.

**STORY TELLING—MR TEEDON—DIFFERENCES AT
THE SUNDAY-EVENING MEETING—MR SCOTT
AND MR BABAN—PLAN OF HIS
EXPOSTULATION**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 25, 1781.

HE that tells a long story should take care that it be not made a long story by his manner of telling it. His expression should be natural, and his method clear, the incidents should be interrupted by very few reflections, and parentheses should be entirely discarded. I do not know that poor Mr Teedon guides himself in the affair of story-telling by any one of these rules, or by any rule indeed that I ever heard of. He has just left us, after a long visit, the greatest part of which he spent in the narration of a certain detail of facts that might have been compressed into a much smaller compass, and my attention to which has wearied and worn out all my spirits. You know how scrupulously nice he is in the choice of his expression, an exactness that soon becomes very inconvenient both to speaker and hearer, where there is not a great variety to choose out of. But Saturday evening is come, the time

I generally devote to my correspondence with you ; and Mrs. Unwin will not allow me to let it pass without writing, though, having done it herself, both she and you might well spare me upon the present occasion

I have not yet read your extract from Mr Scott's letter to Mr. Raban, though I have had an opportunity to do it. I thought it might be better to wait a little, in hope that there might be no need to do it at all. If hereafter it should be necessary to inform him of Mr Scott's feelings and sentiments upon the subject, I will readily perform the office, and accompany the performance of it with such advice of my own, and such reasons as may happen to occur. In the mean time, I am a little apprehensive that opposition may provoke opposition in return, and set a sharper edge upon inclination, already sufficiently whetted to the business

We are not the proper persons to give counsel or direction to Mr Scott, our acquaintance with him is of too short a standing to warrant us in the use of such a liberty. But it is our joint opinion that he will not find himself easily and comfortably settled at Olney while he retains the curacy at Weston. The people of that parish are rather inclined to grumble, and, as we are informed, express some dissatisfaction on finding that they are to have but single service on the Sabbath, and the people here are not well pleased, though they will have the same number of ordinances as before, that they are not to have them at the same time. Some, perhaps, may find the alteration a real inconvenience, and others, who may not find it so, will be glad of an occasion to pretend one. His resignation of Weston would at once annihilate all these complaints, and would, besides, place the Sunday evening meeting and the whole management of it entirely in his own hands, which, as it would prevent the possibility of any bickerings on the account of supernumerary speakers, we should think were a most desirable object. We are well aware that the vicinity of Weston to Ra'nstone is Mr Scott's reason for still continuing to hold the former, but whether, when weighed in the balance against the mischiefs he may incur by doing it, it will be found a sufficient one, may be a matter deserving

consideration. It can be no very difficult thing for his former people to reach him at Olney, though one mile will be added to their journey. If they really prefer him to their new minister, we think such a difficulty as that may be easily surmounted. Whether Mr. Scott's circumstances will afford the sacrifice, we do not know, but Mrs. Unwin thinks, and, if you ask me my opinion, I think so too, that if there be no other objection to the measure, he would do well to commit himself to Providence for a supply. Mr. Browne's age, and the probability, nearly related, I suppose, to a certainty, that Mr. Scott will succeed him in the living, seems, of itself, to reduce that difficulty almost to nothing. My paper is so intolerably bad, as you may perceive by the running of the ink, that it has quite worn out my patience.

Notwithstanding my purpose to shake hands with the Muse, and take my leave of her for the present, we have already had a *tête-à-tête*, since I sent you the last production. I am as much, or rather more pleased with my new plan, than with any of the foregoing. I mean to give a short summary of the Jewish story, the miraculous interpositions in behalf of that people, their great privileges, their abuse of them, and their consequent destruction, and then by way of comparison, such another display of the favours vouchsafed to this country, the similar ingratitude with which they have requited them, and the punishment they have therefore reason to expect, unless reformation interpose to prevent it. *Expostulation* is its present title; but I have not yet found in the writing it, that facility and readiness without which I shall despair to finish it well, or indeed to finish it at all.

Believe me, my dear Sir, with love to Mrs. N,
Your ever affectionate, WM. COWPER.

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CXI.VII.

BOND OF RESIGNATION—VESTRIS AND THE PUBLIC—INVITATION TO STOCK DECLINED—FISH.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

* MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb. 27, 1781.

In the first place my paper is insufferably bad, so that though this is the second sheet on which I have begun to

write, and taken from another quire, I can hardly flatter myself that I shall be able to persevere to the end of it.

I thank you for your relation of Mr. Fytch's dispute with the Bishop ; it affords matter for some reflections not altogether favourable to the episcopal order, as it is easy to see that if his lordship had the power, he does not want the inclination to use the thunder of the Vatican, and anathematize a poor gentleman that dares to oppose him, without mercy. I know not in what part of Scripture he will find it revealed, that a patron, by taking a bond of resignation from the person he presents, forfeits all hope of mercy in this world, and that which is to come. Yet he asserts it as gravely as if he knew it to be true ; but the laity at this time of day are wiser than when they gave their bishops credit for omnipotence, that cheat will pass no longer.

Alas, poor Vestris ! what a pitiable object, how truly French in his humiliation, when he bowed his head down to the stage and held it there, as if he never meant to raise it more ! As humble in his abatement as exalted in his capers, equally French in both. Which is most entitled to compassion, the dancer who is obliged, at the expense of all that is called dignity in man, to stoop to the arbitrary requisitions of an enraged assembly, or that assembly themselves who think it worth their while to spend hours in belowing for satisfaction from the concessions of a dancer ? Considering that life does not last for ages, and they know it, it is not unreasonable to say, that both he and they might set a higher value upon their time, and devote it to a better purpose. It is possible, too, you may think that the maker of this wise reflection might himself have been better employed than in writing what follows upon the subject. I subscribe to the truth of the animadversion, and can only say, in my excuse, that the composition is short, did not cost me much time, and may perhaps provoke a longer, which is not always useless. If you please you may send it to the Poet's Corner.

A CARD.

Poor Vestris, grieved beyond all measure,
To have incurred so much displeasure ;
Although a Frenchman, disconcerted,
And though light hearted, yet heavy hearted,

Begs humbly to inform his friends,
 Next first of April, he intends
 To take a boat and row right down
 To Cuckolds' point, from Richmond town ;
 And as he goes, alert and gay,
 Leap all the bridges in his way
 The boat borne downward with the tide,
 Shall catch him safe on t'other side ,
 He humbly hopes by this expedient,
 To prove himself their most obedient,
 (Which shall be always his endeavour,)
 And jump into their former favour

I have not forgot, though when I wrote last I did not think of answering your kind invitation I can only say at present, that Stock shall be my first visit, but that visiting at this time would be attended with insupportable awkwardness to me, and with such as the visited themselves would assuredly feel the weight of My witticisms, are only current upon paper now, and that sort of paper currency must serve, like the Congress dollars for want of the more valuable coin, myself

We thank you for the intended salmon, and beg you would get yourself made Bishop of Chichester as soon as possible, that we may have to thank you for every kind of eatable fish the British coast produces

Yours ever, WM COWPER

I have hurried to the end as fast as possible, being weary of a letter that is one continued blot

CXLVII

**COWPER CONSENTS THAT HIS NAME SHOULD
 BE PREFIXED TO THE PROPOSED VOLUME OF
 HIS POEMS—DEFENCE OF A PASSAGE TO
 WHICH MR. NEWTON HAD OBJECTED—MANAGEMENT OF MYRTLES—SHAM-FIGHT AT
 OLNEY.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 5, 1791.

SINCE writing is become one of my principal amusements, and I have already produced so many verses on

subjects that entitle them to a hope that they may possibly be useful, I should be sorry to suppress them entirely, or to publish them to no purpose, for want of that cheap ingredient, the name of the author. If my name therefore will serve them in any degree, as a passport into the public notice, they are welcome to it, and Mr Johnson will, if he pleases, announce me to the world by the style and title of "WILLIAM COWPER, Esq., of the Inner Temple." If you are of my mind, I think *Table Talk* will be the best to begin with, as the subjects of it are perhaps more popular, and one would wish, at first setting out, to catch the public by the ear, and hold them by it as fast as possible, that they may be willing to hear one, on a second and a third occasion

The passage you object to I inserted merely by way of catch, and think that it is not unlikely to answer the purpose. My design was to say as many serious things as I could, and yet to be as lively as was compatible with such a purpose. Do not imagine that I mean to stickle for it as a pretty creature of my own that I am loth to part with—but I am apprehensive that without the sprightliness of that passage to introduce it, the following paragraph would not show to advantage.—If the world had been filled with men like yourself, I should never have written it; but thinking myself in a measure obliged to tickle, if I meant to please, I therefore affected a jocularity I did not feel.—As to the rest, wherever there is war, there is misery and outrage; notwithstanding which it is not only lawful to wish, but even a duty to pray for the success of one's country. As to the neutralities, I really think the Russian virago an impertinent puss for meddling with us, and engaging half a score kittens of her acquaintance to scratch the poor old lion, who, if he has been insolent in his day, has probably acted no otherwise than they themselves would have acted in his circumstances, and with his power to embolden them.

I am glad that the myrtles reached you safe, but am persuaded from past experience that no management will keep them long alive in London, especially in the city. Our

English Trots* the native of the country, are for the most part too delicate to thrive there, much more the nice Italian. To give them, however, the best chance they can have, the lady must keep them well watered, giving them a moderate quantity in summer time every other day, and in winter about twice a week, not spring-water, for that would kill them. At Michaclmas, as much of the mould as can be taken out without disturbing the roots must be evacuated, and its place supplied with fresh, the lighter the better. And once in two years the plants must be drawn out of their pots with the entire ball of earth about them, and the matted roots pared off with a sharp knife, when they must be planted again with an addition of rich light earth as before. Thus dealt with, they will grow luxuriantly in a green-house, where they can have plenty of sweet air, which is absolutely necessary to their health. I used to purchase them at Covent Garden almost every year, when I lived in the Temple, but even in that airy situation they were sure to lose their leaf in winter, and seldom recovered it again in spring. I wish them a better fate at Hoxton.

Olney has seen this day what it never saw before, and what will serve it to talk of, I suppose, for years to come. At eleven o'clock this morning a party of soldiers entered the town, driving before it another party, who, after obstinately defending the bridge for some time, were obliged to quit it, and run. They ran in very good order, frequently faced about and fired, but were at last obliged to surrender prisoners of war. There has been much drumming and shouting, much scampering about in the dirt, but not an inch of lace made in the town, at least at the Silver End of it.

It is our joint request that you will not again leave us unwritten to for a fortnight. We are so like yourselves in this particular, that we cannot help ascribing so long a silence to the worst cause. The longer your letters the better, but a short one is better than none.

* What word has been thus mis-printed I am unable to guess and the original letter is one of those which have not been preserved in Mr. Newton's collection.—S.

Mrs Unwin is pretty well, and adds the greetings of her
love to me Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER.

CXLVIII

**PASSAGE TO WHICH MR. NEWTON HAD
OBJECTED, EXPUNGED; AS ALSO THAT RES-
PECTING THELYPHTHORA—HIS MOTIVES FOR
PUBLISHING.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 18, 1781

A SLIGHT disorder in my larboard eye may possibly pre-
vent my writing to you a long letter, and would perhaps
have prevented my writing at all if I had not known that
you account a fortnight's silence a week too long

I am sorry that I gave you the trouble to write twice upon
so trivial a subject as the passage in question I did not un-
derstand by your first objections to it, that you thought it
so exceptionable as you do, but being better informed, I
immediately resolved to expunge it, and subjoin a few lines
which you will oblige me by substituting in its place. I am not
very fond of weaving a political thread into any of my pieces,
and that for two reasons, first, because I do not think my-
self qualified, in point of intelligence, to form a decided
opinion on any such topics, and secondly, because I think
them, though perhaps as popular as any, the most useless
of all The following verses are designed to succeed im-
mediately after

— fights with justice on his side,
Let laurels, drench'd in pure Parnassian dews,
Reward his memory, dear to every Muse, &c.

I am obliged to you for your advice with respect to the
manner of publication, and feel myself inclined to be de-
termin'd by it. So far as I have proceeded on the subject
of *Expostulation*, I have written with tolerable ease to my-
self, and in my own opinion (for an opinion I, am obliged
to have about what I write, whether I will or no,) with
more emphasis and energy than in either of the others But
it seems to open upon me with an abundance of matter,
that forebodes a considerable length, and the time of year

is come when, what with walking and gardening, I can find but little leisure for the pen I mean, however, as soon as I have engrafted a new scion into the *Progress of Error*, instead of Thelyphthora, and when I have transcribed *Truth*, and sent it to you, to apply myself to the composition last undertaken, with as much industry so I can. If therefore the three first are put into the press while I am spinning and weaving the last, the whole may perhaps be ready for publication before the proper season will be past I mean at present that a few select smaller pieces, about seven or eight perhaps, the best I can find in a bookful that I have by me, shall accompany them All together, they will furnish, I should imagine, a volume of tolerable bulk, that need not be indebted to an unreasonable breadth of margin for the importance of its figure

If a Board of Enquiry were to be established, at which poets were to undergo an examination respecting the motives that induced them to publish, and I were to be summoned to attend, that I might give an account of mine, I think I could truly say, what perhaps few poets could, that though I have no objection to lucrative consequences, if any such should follow, they are not my aim; much less is it my ambition to exhibit myself to the world as a genius. What then, says Mr President, can possibly be your motive? I answer, with a bow—Amusement. There is nothing but this—no occupation within the compass of my small sphere, Poetry excepted—that can do much towards diverting that train of melancholy thoughts, which, when I am not thus employed, are for ever pouring themselves in upon me. And if I did not publish what I write, I could not interest myself sufficiently in my own success, to make an amusement of it.

In my account of the battle fought at Olney, I laid a snare for your curiosity, and succeeded I supposed it would have an enigmatical appearance, and so it had, but like most other riddles, when it comes to be solved, you will find that it was not worth the trouble of conjecture—There are soldiers quartered at Newport and at Olney. These met, by order of their respective officers, in Ember-ton Marsh, performed all the manœuvres of a deedy battle,

and the result was that this town was taken. Since I wrote, they have again encountered with the same intention, and Mr Raban kept a room for me and Mrs. Unwin, that we might sit and view them at our ease. We did so, but it did not answer our expectation, for before the contest could be decided, the powder on both sides being expended, the combatants were obliged to leave it an undecided contest. If it were possible that when two great armies spend the night in expectation of a battle, a third could silently steal away their ammunition and arms of every kind, what a comedy would it make of that which always has such a tragical conclusion.

Yours, my dear friend, Wm. COWPER.

CXLIX

HIS TIME FULLY EMPLOYED—ROUGH MANNERS.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 2, 1781.

FINE weather, and a variety of *extraforaneous* occupations (search Johnson's dictionary for that word, and if not found there, insert it—for it saves a deal of circumlocution, and is very lawfully compounded) make it difficult, (excuse the length of a parenthesis, which I did not foresee the length of when I began it, and which may perhaps a little perplex the sense of what I am writing, though, as I seldom deal in that figure of speech, I have the less need to make an apology for doing it at present,) make it difficult (I say) for me to find opportunities for writing. My morning is engrossed by the garden; and in the afternoon, till I have drunk tea, I am fit for nothing. At five o'clock we walk, and when the walk is over, lassitude recommends rest, and again I become fit for nothing. The current hour therefore which (I need not tell you) is comprised in the interval between four and five, is devoted to your service, as the only one in the twenty-four which is not otherwise engaged.

I do not wonder that you have left a great deal upon the occasion you mention in your last, especially on account of the asperity you have met with in the behaviour of your friend. Reflect however that as it is natural to you to

have very fine feelings, it is equally natural to some other tempers, to leave those feelings entirely out of the question, and to speak to you, and to act towards you, just as they do towards the rest of mankind, without the least attention to the irritability of your system. Men of a rough and unsparing address should take great care that they be always in the right, the justness and propriety of their sentiments and censures being the only tolerable apology that can be made for such a conduct, especially in a country where civility of behaviour is inculcated even from the cradle. But in the instance now under our contemplation I think you a sufferer under the weight of an animadversion not founded in truth, and which, consequently, you did not deserve. I account him faithful in the pulpit, who dissembles nothing that he believes, for fear of giving offence. To accommodate a discourse to the judgment and opinion of others, for the sake of pleasing them, though by doing so we are obliged to depart widely from our own, is to be unfaithful to ourselves at least, and cannot be accounted fidelity to him whom we profess to serve. But there are few men who do not stand in need of the exercise of charity and forbearance, and the gentleman in question has afforded you an ample opportunity in this respect, to show how readily, though differing in your views, you can practice all that he could possibly expect from you, if your persuasion corresponded exactly with his own.

With respect to *Monsieur le Curé*, I think you not quite excusable for suffering such a man to give you any uneasiness at all. The grossness and injustice of his demand ought to be its own antidote. If a robber should miscall you a pitiful fellow for not carrying a purse full of gold about you, would his brutality give you any concern? I suppose not. Why then have you been distressed in the present instance?

Yours,

W C.

CL.

ASKING FOR A PREFACE—SQUINT AT
THELYPHTHORA—A RIDDLE.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 8, 1781

SINCE I commenced author, my letters are even less worth your acceptance than they were before I shall soon, however, lay down the character, and cease to trouble you with directions to a printer, at least till the summer is over If I live to see the return of winter, I may perhaps assume it again but my appetite for fame is not keen enough to combat with my love of fine weather, my love of indolence, and my love of gardening employments

I send you by Mr Old my Works complete, bound in brown paper, and numbered according to the series in which I would have them published. With respect to the poem called *Truth*, it is *so* true that it can hardly fail of giving offence to an unenlightened reader I think, therefore, that in order to obviate in some measure those prejudices that will naturally erect their bristles against it, an explanatory preface, such as you (and nobody so well as you) can furnish me with, will have every grace of propriety to recommend it. Or, if you are not averse to the task, and your avocations will allow you to undertake it, and if you think it would still be more proper, I should be glad to be indebted to you for the preface to the whole. I wish you, however, to consult your own judgment upon the occasion, and to engage in either of these works, or neither, just as your discretion guides you

The observations contained in the *Progress of Error*, though as you say, of general application, have yet such an unlucky squint at the author of *Thelyphthora*, that they will be almost as sure to strike him in the sore place, as he will be to read the poem, if published with my name , and I would by no means wish to involve you in the resentment that I shall probably incur by those lines , which might be the consequence of our walking arm in arm into the public notice For my own part I have my answer ready, if I should be called upon , but as you have corres-

ponded with him upon the subject, and have closed that correspondence in as amicable a way as the subject of it would permit, you may perhaps think it would appear like a departure from the friendly moderation of your conduct, to give an open countenance and encouragement to a work in which he seems to be so freely treated. But after all there is no necessity for your name, though I should choose by all means to be honoured with it, if there be no unanswerable objection.—You will find the substituted passage in the Progress of Error, just where the ground was occupied by the reflections upon Mr Madan's performance.

Mr Hill's answer seems to have no fault but what it owes to a virtue. His great charity and candour have in my mind excluded from it that animation and energy, which even a good man might lawfully show when answering a book which could hardly fail to excite a little indignation. Mildness and meekness are not more plainly recommended in Scripture in some instances, than sharpness of reproof and severity in others.

I am very well satisfied with the commendation the reviewers have bestowed upon Sir Airy. It is as much as I hoped for, and I question much whether they will speak so favourably of my next publication.

I have written a great deal to-day, which must be my excuse for an abrupt conclusion. Our love attends you both. We are in pretty good health; Mrs. Unwin indeed better than usual. and as to me, I ail nothing but the incurable ailment.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

Thanks for the cocoa-nut.

I send a cucumber, not of my own raising, and yet raised by me.

Solve this enigma, dark enough
To puzzle any brains
That are not downright puzzle-proof,
And eat it for your pains.

CLI.

**PREFACE—FUTURE STATE OF THE HEATHEN—
SOLUTION OF THE RIDDLE—THELYPTHORA.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Monday, April 23, 1781.

HAVING not the least doubt of your ability to execute just such a preface as I should wish to see prefixed to my publication, and being convinced that you have no good foundation for those which you yourself entertain upon the subject, I neither withdraw my requisition, nor abate one jot of the earnestness with which I made it. I admit the delicacy of the occasion, but am far from apprehending that you will therefore find it difficult to succeed. You can draw a hair-stroke where another man would make a blot as broad as a six pence.

With respect to the Heathen and what I have said about them, the subject is of that kind which every man must settle for himself, and on which we can proceed no further than hypothesis and opinion will carry us. I was willing however to obviate an objection I foresaw, and to do it in a way not derogatory from the truth of the Gospel, yet at the same time as conciliatory as possible to the prejudices of the objector. After all, indeed, I see no medium, either we must suppose them lost, or if saved, saved by virtue of the only propitiation. They seem to me, on the principles of equity, to stand in much the same predicament, and to be entitled, (at least according to human apprehensions of justice,) to much the same allowance as Infants both partakers of a sinful nature, and both unavoidably ignorant of the remedy. Infants I suppose universally saved, because impeccable, and the virtuous Heathen, having had no opportunity to sin against Revelation, and having made a conscientious use of the light of Nature, I should suppose saved too. But I drop a subject on which I could say a good deal more, for two reasons; first, because I am writing a letter, and not an essay, and secondly, because after all I might write about it, I could come to no certain conclusion.

I once had thoughts of annexing a few smaller pieces

to those I have sent you ; but having only very few that I accounted worthy to bear them company, and those for the most part on subjects less calculated for utility than amusement, I changed my mind. If hereafter I should accumulate a sufficient number of these *minutiae* to make a miscellaneous volume, which is not impossible I may perhaps collect and print them.

I am much obliged to you for the interest you take in the appearance of my Poems, and much pleased by the alacrity with which you do it. Your favourable opinion of them affords me a comfortable presage with respect to that of the public , for though I make allowances for your partiality to me and mine, because mine, yet I am sure you would not suffer me unadmonished to add myself to the multitude of insipid rhymers, with whose productions the world is already too much pestered

It is worth while to send *you* a riddle, you make such a variety of guesses, and turn and tumble it about with such an industrious curiosity The solution of that in question is —let me see , it requires some consideration to explain it, even though I made it I raised the seed that produced the plant that produced the fruit, that produced the seed that produced the fruit I sent you. This latter seed I gave to the gardener of Terningham, who brought me the cucumber you mention Thus you see I raised it—that is to say, I raised it virtually by having raised its progenitor , and yet I did not raise it, because the identical seed from which it grew was raised at a distance. You observe I did not speak rashly, when I spoke of it as dark enough to pose an *Oedipus* , and have no need to call your own sagacity in question for falling short of the discovery

A report has prevailed at Olney that you are coming in a fortnight ; but taking it for granted that you know best when you shall come, and that you will make us happy in the same knowledge as soon as you are possessed of it yourself, I did not venture to build any sanguine expectations upon it.

Mr Madan seems to be in the condition of that gentleman of most candid memory, who though he might be confuted was resolved never to be convinced. I have at last

read the second volume of his work, and had some hope that I should prevail with myself to read the first likewise. But endless repetitions, unwarranted conclusions, and wearisome declamations, conquered my perseverance, and obliged me to leave the task unfinished. He boasts in his Introduction that he has attended to a happy mixture of the *utile dulci*. The former I find not, and the latter so sparingly afforded as to be scarce perceptible. You told us, some time since, that his reasons for writing on such a subject were certainly known to a few. If you judge it not imprudent to communicate them by the post, we should be glad to know them too. You know that we are hermetically sealed, and that no secret is the less a secret for our participation of it. I began his book at the latter end, because the first part of it was engaged when I received the second, but I had not so good an appetite as a soldier of the Guards, who, I was informed when I lived in London, would for a small matter eat up a cat alive, beginning at her tail and finishing with her whiskers.

Mrs Unwin sends her love. She is tolerably well, and will rejoice to hear that her application in behalf of your nephew has succeeded. Not having lately heard from Stock, she is ignorant of what has passed.

My love to Mrs Newton

Yours, *ut semper*, WM COWPER.

CLII.

CONTENTS OF HIS VOLUME—PREFACE.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR SIR,

April 25, 1781.

WHILE I thought of publishing only the four pieces already sent, I did not give myself the trouble to peruse with any attention what smaller poems I have by me. But on finding it necessary to make an addition, I have again looked them over, and am glad to find after an enquiry as critical as an author can be supposed to make into the merits of his own productions, that I am in possession of eight hundred lines that may safely, I hope, venture to show themselves in public. To these I would add those copies I translated from

Vincent Bourne, but having no transcript of them myself, I must beg you to take the trouble either to send them hither or to get them written out for me. The whole together will amount nearly to a thousand lines, and as I suppose Mr Johnson will not allot more than one page to one piece, they will fill more paper than the same number of lines written in continuation, and upon the same subject. There are times when I cannot write, and the present is such a time, and were it not, I should yet prefer this method of swelling the volume, to that of filling the vacuity with one long winded poem like the preceding

A variety of measures on a variety of subjects will relieve both the mind and the ear, and may possibly prevent that weariness of which there might otherwise be no small danger.

I hope that what I said in my last has determined you to undertake the preface, in that case the gentleman you mentioned, (Mr Foster,) must upon your walking out of the lines, march in to supply your place. I have no outline to send you, neither shall I have time for any thing but to transcribe, which I will do as fast as I can to be legible, and remit my labours to you by the first opportunity, title-page and motto at the same time

We are sorry that you have not heard from Stock, but hope and have no doubt notwithstanding this silence, that the affair will be settled to your wish. I write in much haste, and have only to add my thanks for your negotiations, and our joint love to you both, with remembrance to all friends at Hoxton

Yours, my dear Sir, WM COWPER

I am at this time a member of the Inner Temple

CIIII

A WOMAN'S MUST—INTIMATION THAT HE HAS A VOLUME IN THE PRESS;

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

May 1, 1781,

W YOUR mother says I *must* write, and *must* admits of no ponology, I might otherwise plead, that I have nothing to the, that I am weary, that I am dull, that it would be more

convenient therefore for you, as well as for myself, that I should let it alone, but all these pleas, and whatever pleas besides either disinclination, indolence, or necessity might suggest, are over-ruled, as they ought to be, the moment a lady adduces her irrefragable argument, *you must*. You have still however one comfort left, that what I must write, you may, or may not read, just as it shall please you; unless Lady Anne at your elbow should say, you *must* read it, and then like a true knight you will obey without looking out for a remedy.

I do not love to harp upon strings that to say the least, are not so musical as one would wish. But you I know have many a time sacrificed your own feelings to those of others, and where an act of charity leads you, are not easily put out of your way. This consideration encourages me just to insinuate that your silence on the subject of a certain nomination is distressful to more than you would wish, in particular to the little boy whose clothes are out-grown and worn out; and to his mother, who is unwilling to furnish him with a new suit, having reason to suppose that the long blue petticoat would soon supersede it, if she should.

In the press, and speedily will be published, in one volume octavo, price three shillings, Poems, by William Cowper, of the Inner Temple, Esq. You may suppose, by the size of the publication, that the greatest part of them have been long kept secret, because you yourself have never seen them; but the truth is, that they are most of them, except what you have in your possession, the produce of the last winter. Two-thirds of the compilation, will be occupied by four pieces, the first of which sprung up in the month of December, and the last of them in the month of March. They contain, I suppose, in all, about two thousand and five hundred lines, are known, or to be known in due time, by the names of *Table Talk—The progress of Error—Truth—Expostulation*. Mr Newton writes a Preface, and Johnson is the publisher. The principal, I may say the only reason why I never mentioned to you, till now, an affair which I am just going to make known to all the world (if that Mr. All-the-world should

think it worth his knowing,) has been this, that till within these few days, I had not the honour to know it myself. This may seem strange, but it is true, for not knowing where to find underwriters who would choose to insure them, and not finding it convenient to a purse like mine, to run any hazard, even upon the credit of my own ingenuity, I was very much in doubt for some weeks, whether any bookseller would be willing to subject himself to an ambiguity, that might prove very expensive in case of a bad market. But Johnson has heroically set all peradventures at defiance, and takes the whole charge upon himself. So out I come. I shall be glad of my Translations from Vincent Bourne, in your next frank. My Muse will lay herself at your feet immediately on her first public appearance.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CLIV

THE SAME ANNOUNCEMENT.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,

May 9, 1781

I AM in the press, and it is in vain to deny it. But how mysterious is the conveyance of intelligence from one end to the other of your great city!—Not many days since, except one man, and he but a little taller than yourself, all London was ignorant of it, for I do not suppose that the public prints have yet announced this most agreeable tidings, the title-page, which is the basis of the advertisement, having so lately reached the publisher; and now it is known to you, who live at least two miles distant from my confidant upon the occasion.

My labours are principally the production of the last winter, all indeed, except a few of the minor pieces. When I can find no other occupation, I think, and when I think, I am very apt to do it in rhyme. Hence it comes to pass that the season of the year which generally pinches off the flowers of poetry, unfolds mine, such as they are, and crowns me with a winter garland. In this respect therefore, I and my contemporary bards are by no means upon a par. They write when the delightful influences of fine weather, fine prospects and a

brisk motion of the animal spirits, make poetry almost the language of nature, and I, when icicles depend from all the leaves of the Parnassian laurel, and when a reasonable man would as little expect to succeed in verse, as to hear a black bird whistle. This must be my apology to you for whatever want of fire and animation you may observe in what you will shortly have the perusal of. As to the public, if they like me not, there is no remedy. A friend will weigh and consider all disadvantages, and make as large allowances as an author can wish, and larger perhaps than he has any right to expect, but not so the world at large, whatever they do not like, they will not by any apology be persuaded to forgive, and it would be in vain to tell *them*, that I wrote my verses in January, for they would immediately reply, "Why did not you write them in May?" A question that might puzzle a wiser head than we poets are generally blessed with.

W. C.

CLV

REASONS FOR NOT SHOWING HIS PREFACE
TO MR. UNWIN.

TO THE REV. W. UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 10, 1781

It is Friday, I have just drank tea, and just perused your letter and though this answer can not set off till Sunday, I obey the warm impulse I feel, which will not permit me to postpone the business till the regular time of writing.

I expected you would be grieved, if you had not been so, those sensibilities which attend you upon every other occasion, must have left you upon this. I am sorry that I have given you pain, but not sorry that you have felt it. A concern of that sort would be absurd, because it would be to regret your friendship for me and to be dissatisfied with the effect of it. Allow yourself however three minutes only for reflection, and your penetration must necessarily dive into the motives of my conduct. In the first place, and by way of preface, remember that I do not (whatever your partiality may incline you to do)

account it of much consequence to any friend of mine, whether he is, or is not employed by me upon such an occasion. But all affected renunciations of poetical merit apart, (and all unaffected expressions of the sense I have of my own littleness in the poetical character too) the obvious and only reason why I resorted to Mr. Newton, and not to my friend Unwin, was this—that the former lived in London, the latter at Stock, the former was upon the spot to correct the press, to give instructions respecting any sudden alterations, and to settle with the publisher every thing that might possibly occur in the course of such a business. The latter could not be applied to, for these purposes, without what would be a manifest encroachment on his kindness, because it might happen, that the troublesome office might cost him now and then a journey, which it was absolutely impossible for me to endure the thought of.

When I wrote to you for the copies you have sent me, I told you I was making a collection, but not with a design to publish. There is nothing truer, than that at that time I had not the smallest expectation of sending a volume of Poems to the press. I had several small pieces that might amuse, but I would not, when I publish, make the amusement of the reader my only object. When the winter deprived me of other employments, I began to compose, and seeing six or seven months before me, which would naturally afford me much leisure for such a purpose, I undertook a piece of some length, that finished, another, and so on, till I had amassed the number of lines I mentioned in my last.

Believe of me what you please, but not that I am indifferent to you, or your friendship for me, on any occasion.

Yours,

W C

CLVI

MARTIN MADAN—EPIGRAM—POLITICAL GUESSES.

• TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

• MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 13, 1781

We thank you for the anecdote sent us in compliance with our desire. Added at the end of a certain treatise, it

would operate as a powerful antidote to the erroneous opinion it inculcates, and sufficiently explain the mystery of a sensible man addicting himself to a silly enterprise, and vainly endeavouring to accomplish it by reasonings that would disgrace a boy

You are not sorry I suppose that your correspondence with him is at an end, you might perhaps have easily secured the continuance of it had you been less explicit, but it must have been at the expense of that point of honour which a spiritual warrior of your rank and character, will upon no consideration abandon. A gentler reprehension, an air of pleasantry, or any disguise of your real sentiments whatever, would still have left room for what he would have called a friendly intercourse. But your friendship for him has now produced the strongest proof of its sincerity; and though he is not able to bear it, the time may come (it will be unhappy for him indeed if it never should,) when he will know how to value it and to thank you for it

The rudeness of his answer, --I was going to give it a harsher character, --exceeds all that I could have thought it possible he could be provoked to treat you with, merely because you cannot see with his eyes, and have had the boldness to tell him so

M quarrels with N, for M wrote a book,
And N did not like it, which M could not brook,
So he call'd him a bigot, a wrangler, a monk,
With as many hard names as would line a good trunk,
And set up his back, and claw'd like a cat,
But N liked it never the better for that
Now N had a wife, and he wanted but one,
Which stuck in M's stomach as cross as a bone.
It has always been reckon'd a just cause of strife
For a man to make free with another man's wife;
But the strife is the strangest that ever was known,
If a man must be scolded for loving his own.

Mrs Unwin rejoices that the nomination affair is at last accomplished, she accounts your thanks for it more than a sufficient recompense, and is sorry it is not in her power to give you and Mrs Newton more important proofs of her regard --I asked her what I should say, and she bade me say all this.

I am ready to wish that you may not yet have sent the Translations of Bourne to Johnson, because I find it necessary to put forth a new edition of the two last stanzas of the Cricket. One of them was disgraced by a false rhyme, and the other was too long by two lines. By the way Mr Unwin has sent me three of them, but the Glowworm and the Cantab he has not sent.

This last victory over the Americans will go near to verify my poetical prediction, and Sir Joshua will have nothing to do but to record the completion of a prophecy which is the more respectable, because when first delivered, it seemed so very improbable. Rebellion it should seem must soon be extinguished, crippled by defeat and destitute of resources, and extinction of the war will soon follow it. I have taken prudent care however to save my credit at all events, and having foretold both fair weather and foul, the former in the piece just alluded to, and the latter in Expostulation, fall back, fall edge, as they say, like the Newton-shepherds, my soothsaying is sure to be accomplished.

There is, I am afraid, a perverseness and persevering spirit of opposition to Mr Scott, that will grieve you, though you will not suffer it to disturb your temper. Mr. Scott acts wisely, and takes no notice of it either in conversation with the people or in the pulpit.

The ducks could not be pulled, because it was necessary they should be killed on a Sunday.

Yours, my dear friend, and Mrs Newton's

WM COWPER

CLVII

**INTENTION OF CORRECTING THE PROOFS HIMSELF
—MARTIN MADAN—EXPECTED VISIT OF THE
NEWTONS.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 21, 1781

- I AM not so impatient to see myself in print, as to be at all disconcerted by the delay. I was sufficiently aware, that with Johnson's utmost despatch he would be too late,

and that the summer, which is just at the door, would tread too close upon the heels of the publication. I had much rather therefore proceed leisurely as he advises, (if he will indeed go on to print at his leisure,) and so avail myself of the complete opportunity that winter will bring with it, than open my stall just when the Fair is over.

The case standing thus, and this leisurely proceeding being so favourable to my purpose, I have conceived a design to save you the trouble of revising the proofs, and that for two reasons, first, because your time is precious, and mine is not so; and secondly, because having written nothing of late that I do not retain *memoriter*, it is impossible for the alteration of a word, or the least inaccuracy to escape me.

I mean therefore to furnish myself with London and country franks, and to desire Johnson to transmit the proofs to me

I would have a strange appearance, and is hardly a supposable case, but for amusement sake we will endeavour to suppose it for a moment. A man (he must be a confirmed stoic) stands encompassed by a dozen others,—one tweaks his nose, one pinches his sides, one slaps his right cheek, and one his left; one treads upon his toes, one spits in his face, one thrusts pins into the calves of his legs and one kicks him on the breech, one raps the knuckles of one hand, one of the other. One sets a fool's cap upon his head, and another, a man of some wit and with a reasonable share of humour, sneers, laughs, and makes faces at him, while his associates are thus employed in tormenting him. The patient, (for patient he must needs be if he keeps his senses,) affects to be all the while perfectly at his ease, denies that any body touches him, calls them his dear friends, observes that it is a very fine day, and takes snuff.

Extravagant as this picture may seem, it bears I think some resemblance to Mr Madan. He is or would seem to be insensible of the many smart strokes he receives from his antagonists, they are a parcel of insignificant wretches,—some of them indeed his very good friends, whose opposition to his book is rather an argument of their own bigo-

try or folly than any inconvenience to him and as to the rest, whether they write, or the wind whistles, is a matter of the most absolute indifference. And yet, as in the case above delineated, the unhappy gentleman must undoubtedly suffer a great deal, so must the author of *Thelyphthora*, if the two clubs of learning and logic, and the stinging nettles of wit and humour can possibly make him feel. By the way we shall be glad if you can bring Mr Barton's book with you

Mrs Unwin sends her love We both wait for the day appointed with a pleasing sort of impatience, and comfort ourselves with the thought that though we cannot hasten its approach one moment, it will come, and must come, and that the interval, let what will happen, and how long soever it may seem, can be but a fortnight We mean if you are able to keep your assignation

She will be obliged to Mrs Newton if she will be so good as to bring with her six tooth brushes, a quarter of a pound of oystershell powder, and two pounds of the same bohea as before We shall hope to see you at dinner on Saturday, and as much sooner as you please, we always dine at two

Yours, my dear Sir, and Mrs Newton's,

Con ogni rispetto affe tuoso, WM COWPER

CLVIII

DELAYS IN PRINTING—MISCHIEF OF A CARELESS OR CONCOITED CORRECTOR OF THE PRESS—REQUEST FOR FRANKS—VINCENT BOURNE—SCANDALOUS CLERGYMEN.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 23, 1781

IF a writer's friends have need of patience, how much more the writer! You desire to see my muse in public and mine to gratify you, must both suffer the mortification of delay I expected that my trumpeter would have informed the world by this time of all that is needful for them to know upon such occasion, and that an advertising blast, blown

through every newspaper, would have said—"The poet is coming!"—But man, especially man that writes verse, is born to disappointments, as surely as printers and booksellers are born to be the most dilatory and tedious of all creatures. The plain English of this magnificent preamble is, that the season of publication is just elapsed, that the town is going into the country every day, and that my book cannot appear till they return, that is to say, not till next winter.

This misfortune however comes not without its attendant advantage, I shall now have, what I should not otherwise have had, an opportunity to correct the press myself, no small advantage upon any occasion, but especially important, where poetry is concerned! A single erratum may knock out the brains of a whole passage, and that perhaps, which of all others the unfortunate poet is the most proud of. Add to this, that now and then there is to be found in a printing-house a presumptuous intermeddler, who will fancy himself a poet too, and what is still worse, a better than he that employs him. The consequence is, that with cobbling, and tinkering, and patching on here and there a shred of his own, he makes such a difference between the original and the copy, that an author cannot know his own work again. Now as I choose to be responsible for no body's dulness but my own, I am a little comforted, when I reflect that it will be in my power to prevent all such impertinence, and yet not without your assistance. It will be quite necessary, that the correspondence between me and Johnson should be carried on without the expense of postage, because proof sheets would make double or treble letters, which expense, as in every instance it must occur twice, first when the packet is sent, and again when it is returned, would be rather inconvenient to me, who, as you perceive, am forced to live by my wits, and to him, who hopes to get a little matter no doubt by the same means. Half a dozen franks therefore to me, and *totidem* to him, will be singularly acceptable, if you can, without feeling it in any respect a trouble, procure them for me.

My neckcloths being all worn out, I intend to wear stocks, but not unless they are more fashionable than the former.

In that case, I shall be obliged to you if you will buy me a handsome stock-buckle, for a very little money, for twenty or twenty-five shillings perhaps a second-hand affair may be purchased that will make a figure at Olney.

I am much obliged to you for your offer to support me in a translation of Bourne. It is but seldom, however, and never except for my amusement, that I translate, because I find it disagreeable to work by another man's pattern, I should at least be sure to find it so in a business of any length. Again *that* is epigrammatic and witty in Latin, which would be perfectly insipid in English, and a translator of Bourne would frequently find himself obliged to supply what is called the turn, which is in fact the most difficult, and the most expensive part of the whole composition, and could not perhaps, in many instances, be done with any tolerable success. If a Latin poem is neat, elegant, and musical, it is enough; but English readers are not so easily satisfied. To quote myself, you will find, in comparing the Jackdaw with the original, that I was obliged to sharpen a point which, though smart enough in the Latin, would, in English, have appeared, as plain, and as blunt, as the tag of a lace. I love the memory of Vinny Bourne. I think him a better Latin poet than Tibullus, Propertius, Ausonius, or any of the writers in *his* way, except Ovid, and not at all inferior to *him*. I love him too with a love of partiality, because he was usher of the fifth form at Westminster, when I passed through it. He was so good-natured, and so inoffensive, that I lost more than I got by him, for he made me as idle as himself. He was such a sloven, as if he had rusted to his genius as a cloak for everything that could disgust you in his person, and indeed in his writings he has almost made amends for all. His humour is entirely original, he can speak of a magpie or a cat in terms so exquisitely appropriated to the character he draws, that one would suppose him animated by the spirit of the creature he describes. And with all this drollery there is a mixture of rational and even religious reflection at times and always an air of pleasantry, good-nature, and humanity, that makes him, in my mind, one of the most amiable writers in the world. It is not common to meet with an author who can make you

smile, and yet at no body's expense; who is always entertaining, and yet always harmless, and who, though always elegant, and classical to a degree not always found even in the classics themselves, charms more by the simplicity and playfulness of his ideas, than by the neatness and purity of his verse, yet such was poor Vinny I remember seeing the Duke of Richmond set fire to his greasy locks, and box his ears to put it out again

I am delighted with your project, but not with the view I have of its success. If the world would from its opinion of the clerical character at large, from yours in particular, I have no doubt but the event would be as prosperous as you could wish. But I suppose there is not a member of either house who does not see within the circle of his own acquaintance, a minister, perhaps many ministers, whose integrity would contribute but little to the effect of such a bill. Here are seven or eight in the neighbourhood of Olney, who have shaken hands with sobriety, and who would rather suppress the church, were it not for the emoluments annexed, than discourage the sale of strong beer in a single instance. Were I myself in Parliament, I am not sure that I could favour your scheme, are there not to be found within five miles of almost every neighbourhood, parsons who would purchase well accustomed public-houses, because they could secure them a license, and patronize them when they had done? I think no penalty would prevent the abuse, on account of the difficulty of proof, and that no ingenuity could guard against all the possible abuses. To sum up all in few words, the generality of the clergy, especially within these last twenty or thirty years, have worn their circles so loose, that I verily believe no measure that proposed an accession of privilege to an order which the laity retain but little respect for would meet with the countenance of the legislature. You will do me the justice to suppose that I do not say these things to gratify a splenetic humour or a censorious turn of mind, far from it,—it may add, perhaps, to the severity of the foregoing observations to assert, but if it does, I cannot help asserting, that I verily believe them to be founded upon fact, and that I am sure, partly from my

own knowledge, and partly from the report of those whose veracity I can depend upon, that in this part of the world at least, many of the most profligate characters are the very men to whom the morals, and even the souls of others are entrusted, and I cannot suppose that the diocese of Lincoln, or this part of it in particular, is more unfortunate in that respect than the rest of the kingdom

Since I began to write long poems, I seem to turn up my nose at the idea of a short one. I have lately entered upon one, which, if ever finished, cannot easily be comprised in much less than a thousand lines! But this must make part of a second publication, and be accompanied, in due time, by others not yet thought of; for it seems (which I did not know till the bookseller had occasion to tell me so) that single pieces stand no chance, and that nothing less than a volume will go down. You yourself afford me a proof of the certainty of this intelligence, by sending me ranks which nothing less than a volume can fill. I have accordingly sent you one, but am obliged to add, that had he wind been in any other point of the compass, or, blowing as it does from the east, had it been less boisterous, you must have been contented with a much shorter letter, but the abridgment of every other occupation is very avourable to that of writing.

I am glad I did not expect to hear from you by this post, for the boy has lost the bag in which your letter must have been enclosed,—another reason for my prolixity!

Yours affectionately,

W. C

CLIX.

FRANKS—COWPER NO HORSEMAN.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May, 1781

I BELIEVE I never give you trouble without feeling more than I give, so much by way of preface and apology. Thus stands the case. Johnson has begun to print, and Mr Newton has already corrected the first sheet. This unexpected despatch makes it necessary for me to furnish myself with means of communication, viz. the franks, as

soon as may be. There are reasons (I believe I mentioned them in my last) why I choose to revise the proofs myself:—nevertheless, if your delicacy must suffer the puncture of a pin's point in procuring the franks for me, I release you entirely from the task, you are as free as if I had never mentioned them. But you will oblige me by a speedy answer upon this subject, because it is expedient that the printer should know to whom he is to send his copy, and when the press is once set, those humble servants of the poets are rather impatient of any delay, because the types are wanted for other authors, who are equally in haste to be borne.

This fine weather I suppose sets you on horseback, and allures the ladies into the garden. If I was at Stock, I should be of their party, and while they sat knotting or netting in the shade, should comfort myself with the thought, that I had not a beast under me, whose walk would seem tedious, whose trot would jumble me, and whose gallop might throw me into a ditch. What nature expressly designed me for I have never been able to conjecture; I seem to myself so universally disqualified for the common and customary occupations and amusements of mankind. When I was a boy, I excelled at cricket and foot-ball, but the fame I acquired by achievements in that way is long since forgotten, and I do not know that I have made a figure in any thing since. I am sure however that she did not design me for a horseman, and that, if all men were of my mind, there would be an end of all jockeyship for ever. I am rather straitened in time, and not very rich in materials, therefore, with our joint love to you all, conclude myself,
Yours ever, W. C.

CLX.

JOHNSON'S DILIGENCE—WARMTH OF THE SEASON—RECOLLECTIONS ON A FUTURE STATE

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 28, 1781.

I AM much obliged to you for the pains you have taken with my *Table Talk*, and wish that my *vox* *voce* *Table Talk*

could repay you for the trouble you have had with the written one.

I am quite surprised at Johnson's diligence, and began to wish, while reading your account of it, that I had left the business of correction in your hands, but presently recollecting that it is a tedious troublesome employment, and fit only for the author himself to be burthened with, I relapsed into my former sentiment. My franks are not yet ready, but I shall lose no time in procuring them if they are to be got. I enclose a line to Johnson, to tell him that if in the meantime, and while you are absent from town, another parcel of the proof should be ready for revision, I wish him to send it hither by the diligence. I am as well convinced of the accuracy and exactness with which you would perform the task, as it is possible for me to be of my own, and if I can obtain no franks shall after all have recourse to your assistance.

The season is wonderfully improved within this day or two, and if these cloudless skies are continued to us, or rather if the cold winds do not set in again, promises you a pleasant excursion, as far, at least, as the weather can conduce to make it such. You seldom complain of too much sunshine, and if you are prepared for a heat somewhat like that of Africa, the south walk in our long garden will exactly suit you. Reflected from the gravel, and from the walls, and beating upon your head at the same time, it may possibly make you wish you could enjoy for an hour or two that immensity of shade afforded by the gigantic trees still growing in the land of your captivity. If you could spend a day now and then in those forests, and return with a wish to England, it would be no small addition to the number of your best pleasures. But *pennæ non homin datæ*. The time will come perhaps, (but death must come first,) when you will be able to visit them without either danger, trouble or expense, and when the contemplation of those well-remembered scenes will awaken in you emotions of gratitude and praise surpassing all you could possibly sustain at present. In this sense, I suppose, there is a heaven upon earth at all times, and that the disembodied spirit may find a peculiar joy arising from the contemplation of those places

it was formerly conversant with, and so far, at least, be reconciled to a world it was once so weary of, as to use it in the delightful way of thankful recollection.

Miss Catlett must not think of any other lodging than we can without any inconvenience, as we shall with all possible pleasure, furnish her with. We can each of us say,—that is I can say it in Latin, and Mrs. Unwin in English,—*Nihil tui & me alienum puto* She shall have a great bed and a great room, and we shall have the chamber we always occupy, when we have company, and should certainly occupy, if she was not of the party. This state of the case leaves no room for the least objection, we desire therefore that you will give our love to her, tell her we shall expect her, and that she will be but half as welcome to us if she sleeps anywhere else.

Having two more letters to write, I find myself obliged to shorten this, so once more wishing you good journey, and ourselves the happiness of receiving you in good health and spirits,

I remain

Affectionately yours, W C

CLXI.

HIS MOTIVES FOR WRITING—PROVIDENCE

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 5, 1781.

If the old adage be true, that "he gives twice, who gives speedily," it is equally true, that he who not only uses expedition in giving, but gives more than was asked, gives thrice at least. Such is the style in which Mr. Smith confers a favour. He has not only sent me franks to Johnson, but, under another cover, has added six to you. These last, for aught that appears by your letter, he threw in of his own mere bounty. I beg that my share of thanks may not be wanting on this occasion, and that when you write to him next you will assure him of the sense I have of the obligation, which is the more flattering, as it includes a proof of his predilection in favour of the poems his franks are destined to enclose. May they not forfeit his good opinion

hereafter, nor yours, to whom I hold myself indebted in the first place, and who have equally given me credit for their deservings! Your mother says, that although there are passages in them containing opinions which will not be universally subscribed to, the world will at least allow—what my great modesty will not permit me to subjoin I have the highest opinion of her judgment, and know, by having experienced the soundness of them, that her observations are always worthy of attention and regard. Yet, strange as it may seem, I do not feel the vanity of an author, when she commends me,—but I feel something better, a spur to my diligence, and a cordial to my spirits, both together animating me to deserve, at least not to fall short of her expectations. For I verily believe, if my dulness should earn me the character of a dunce, the censure would affect her more than me, not that I am insensible of the value of a good name, either as a man or an author. Without an ambition to attain it, it is absolutely unattainable under either of those descriptions. But my life having been in many respects a series of mortifications and disappointments, I am become less apprehensive and impressible perhaps in some points, than I should otherwise have been, and though I should be exquisitely sorry to disgrace my friends, could endure my own share of the affliction with a reasonable measure of tranquillity.

These seasonable showers have poured floods upon all the neighbouring parishes, but have passed us by. My garden languishes, and, what is worse, the fields to languish, and the upland grass is burnt. These discriminations are not fortuitous. But if they are providential, what do they import? I can only answer, as a friend of mine once answered a mathematical question in the schools—“*Prorsus nescio*.” Perhaps it is, that men, who will not believe what they cannot understand, may learn the folly of their conduct, while their very senses are made to witness against them, and themselves in the course of Providence become the subject of a thousand dispensations they cannot explain. But the end is never answered. The lesson is inculcated indeed frequently enough, but nobody learns it well. Instruction vouchsafed in vain is (I suppose) a debt to be

accounted for hereafter You must understand this to be soliloquy I wrote my thoughts without recollecting that was writing a letter, and to you W. C.

CLXII.

**DESIGN OF HIS POEM UPON TRUTH—AN INDEPENDENT GARDENER—MR. UNWIN'S
DIFFIDENCE.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 24, 1781.

THE letter you withheld so long, lest it should give me pain, gave me pleasure Horace says, the poets are a waspish race, and from my own experience of the temper of two or three, with whom I was formerly connected, I can readily subscribe to the character he gives them. But for my own part, I have never yet felt that excessive irritability, which some writers discover, when a friend, in the words of Pope,

"Just hints a fault, or hesitates dislike "

Least of all would I give way to such an unseasonable ebullition, merely because a civil question is proposed to me with much gentleness, and by a man whose concern for my credit and character I verily believe to be sincere. I reply therefore, not peevishly, but with a sense of the kindness of your intentions, that I hope you may make yourself very easy on a subject, that I can perceive has occasioned you some solicitude When I wrote the poem called *Truth*, by which is intended Religious Truth, it was indispensably necessary that I should set forth that doctrine which I know to be true, and that I should pass what I understood to be a just censure upon opinions and persuasions that differ from, or stand in direct opposition to it; because, though some errors may be innocent, and even religious errors are not always pernicious, yet in a case where the faith and hope of a Christian are concerned, they must necessarily be destructive, and because, neglecting this, I should have betrayed my subject; either suppressing what,

in my judgment, is of the last importance, or giving countenance, by a timid silence, to the very evils it was my design to combat. That you may understand me better, I will subjoin—that I wrote that poem on purpose to inculcate the eleemosynary character of the Gospel, as a dispensation of mercy, in the most absolute sense of the word, to the exclusion of all claims of merit on the part of the receiver, consequently to set the brand of invalidity upon the plea of works, and to discover, upon scriptural ground, the absurdity of that notion, which includes a solecism in the very terms of it, that man, by repentance and good works, may deserve the mercy of his Maker, I call it a solecism, because mercy deserved ceases to be mercy, and must take the name of justice. This is the opinion which I said, in my last, the world would not acquiesce in, but except this, I do not recollect that I have introduced a syllable into any of my pieces, that they can possibly object to, and even this I have endeavoured to deliver from doctrinal dryness, by as many pretty things, in the way of trinket and plaything, as I could muster upon the subject. So that if I have rubbed their gums, I have taken care to do it with a coral, and even that coral embellished by the ribband to which it is tied, and recommended by the tinkling of all the bells I could contrive to annex to it.

You need not trouble yourself to call on Johnson, being perfectly acquainted with the progress of the business, I am able to satisfy your curiosity myself. The post before the last I returned to him the second sheet of *Table Talk*, which he had sent me for correction, and which stands foremost in the volume. The delay has enabled me to add a piece of considerable length, which, but for the delay, would not have made its appearance upon this occasion, it answers to the name of *Hope*.

Your Independent gardener's excuses for his breach of the Sabbath are in my mind paltry, and all put together amount to no more than this,—that I choose to turn a penny when I can, and am determined that the sanctity of the day shall never interfere with a concern of so much greater importance. The barber and hair-dresser who officiates for me,

would not wait upon the King himself on a Sunday, though he could easily make apologies more plausible than any adduced by the old man you mention, were he disposed to trespass against his duty and his conscience.

I remember a line in the *Odyssey*, which, literally translated, imports that there is nothing in the world more impudent than the belly. But had Homer met with an instance of modesty like yours, he would either have suppressed that observation, or at least have qualified it with an exception. I hope that, for the future, Mrs Unwin will never suffer you to go to London, without putting some victuals in your pocket, for what a strange article would it make in a newspaper, that a tall, well-dressed gentleman, by his appearance a clergyman, and with a purse of gold in his pocket, was found starved to death in the street! How would it puzzle conjecture, to account for such a phenomenon! Some would suppose that you had been kidnapped, like Betty Cunning, of hungry memory, others would say, the gentleman was a Methodist, and had practised a rigorous self-denial, which had unhappily proved too hard for his constitution, but I will venture to say that nobody would divine the real cause, or suspect for a moment, that your modesty had occasioned tragedy in question. By the way, is it not possible, that the spareness and slenderness of your person may be owing to the same cause? for surely it is reasonable to suspect, that the bashfulness which could prevail against you, on so trying occasion, may be equally prevalent on others. I remember having been told by Colman, that when he once dined with Garrick, he repeatedly pressed him to eat more of a certain dish, that he was known to be particularly fond of, Colman as often refused, and at last declared he could not "But could not you" says Garrick, "if you were in a dark closet by yourself?" The same question might perhaps be put to you, with as much, or more propriety, and therefore I recommend it to you, either to furnish yourself with a little more assurance, or always to eat in the dark.

We sympathize with Mr Unwin; and if it will be any comfort to her to know it, can assure her, that a lady in our neighbourhood is always, on such occasions, the most miser-

able of all things, and yet escapes with great facility through all the dangers of her state.

Yours *ut semper*,

W. C

CLXIII.

**MR. NEWTON'S LATE VISIT—LADY AUSTEN'S
FIRST VISIT—ARRANGEMENT OF HIS POEMS
IMPROVED IN PRINTING—HIS IMAGINARY
PORTRAIT.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 7, 1781.

MR. OLD brought us the acceptable news of your safe arrival. My sensations at your departure were far from pleasant, and Mrs Unwin suffered more upon the occasion than when you first took leave of Olney. When we shall meet again, and in what circumstances, or whether we shall meet or not, is an article to be found no where but in that volume of Providence which belongs to the current year, and will not be understood till it is accomplished. This I know, that your visit was most agreeable here. It was so even to me, who though I live in the midst of many agreeables, am but little sensible of their charms. But when you came, I determined, as much as possible, to be deaf to the suggestions of despair; that if I could contribute but little to the pleasure of the opportunity, I might not dash it with unseasonable melancholy, and, like an instrument with a broken string, interrupt the harmony of the concert.

Lady Austen, waving all forms, has paid us the first visit; and not content with showing us that proof of her respect, made handsome apologies for her intrusion. We returned the visit yesterday. She is a lively, agreeable woman, has seen much of the world, accounts it a great simpleton, as it is. She laughs and makes laugh, and keeps up a conversation without seeming to labour at it.

I had rather submit to chastisement now, than be obliged to undergo it hereafter. If Johnson, therefore, will mark with a marginal Q, those lines that he or his object to as

not sufficiently finished, I will willingly retouch them, or give a reason for my refusal. I shall moreover think myself obliged by any hints of that sort, as I do already to somebody who, by running here and there two or three paragraphs into one, has very much improved the arrangement, of my matter. I am apt, I know, to fitter it into too many pieces and, by doing so, to disturb that order to which all writings must owe their perspicuity, at least in a considerable measure. With all that carefulness of revisal I have exercised upon the sheets as they have been transmitted to me, I have been guilty of an oversight, and have suffered a great fault to escape me, which I shall be glad to correct if not too late.

In the *Progress of Error*, a part of the Young Squire's apparatus, before he yet enters upon his travels, is said to be

—Memorandum-book to minnte down

The severall posts, and where the chaise broke down.

Here, the reviewers would say, is not only "down" but "down derry down" into the bargain, the word being made to rhyme to itself. This never occurred to me till last night, just as I was stepping into bed. I should be glad, however, to alter it thus—

With memorandum book for every town,

And every inn, and where the chaise broke down.

I have advanced so far in *Charity*, that I have ventured to give Johnson notice of it, and his option whether he will print it now or hereafter. I rather wish he may choose the present time, because it will be a proper sequel to *Hope*, and because I am willing to think it will embellish the collection. Mrs Unwin proposes to send a couple of ducks by next Friday's diligence, when I imagine this last production will have a place in the basket.

Whoever means to take my phiz will find himself sorely perplexed in seeking for a fit occasion. That I shall not give him one is certain, and if he steals one, he must be as cunning and quick-sighted a thief as Autolycus himself. His best course will be to draw a face, and call it mine, at a venture. They who have not seen me these twenty years will say, it may possibly be a striking likeness now, though it bears no resemblance to what he was. Time makes great alterations. They who know me better will say perhaps,

Though it is not perfectly the thing, yet there is somewhat of the cast of his countenance. If the nose was a little longer, and the chin a little shorter, the eyes a little smaller, and the forehead a little more protuberant, it would be just the man. And thus, without seeing me at all, the artist may represent me to the public eye, with as much exactness as yours has bestowed upon you, though, I suppose, the original was full in his view when he made the attempt.

We are both as well as when you left us Our hearty affections wait upon yourself and Mrs. Newton, not forgetting Euphrosyne, the laughing lady.

Yours, my dear Sir,

WM COWPER.

CLXIV

ON RHYME.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY VERY DEAR FRIEND,

July 12, 1781.

I AM going to send, what when you have read, you may scratch your head, and say, I suppose, there's nobody knows, whether what I have got, be verse or not. by the tune and the time, it ought to be rhyme, but if it be, did you ever see of late or of yore, such a ditty before? The thought did occur, to me and to her, as Madam and I, did walk and not fly, over hills and dales, with spreading sails, before it was dark, to Weston Park.

The news at *Olney* is little or none, but such as it is, I send it, viz Poor Mr Peace cannot yet cease, adding his head with what you said, and has left parish-church quite in the lurch, having almost sworn to go there no more

Page and his wife, that made such a strife, we met them twain in Dog Lane; we gave them the wall, and that was all For Mr. Scott, we have seen him not, except as he pass'd, in a wonderful haste, to see a friend in Silver End. Mrs. Jones proposes, ere July closes, that she and her sister, and her Jones Mister, and we that are here, our course shall steer to dine in the Spinney, but for a guinea, if the weather should hold, so hot and so cold, we had better by far stay where we are For the grass there grows, while no body mows, (which is very wrong,) so rank and long, that

so to speak, 'tis at least a week, if it happens to rain, ere it dries again.

I have writ Charity, not for popularity, but as well as I could in hopes to do good, and if the Reviewer should say "to be sure, the gentleman's Muse, were, wears Methodist shoe", you may know by her pace, and talk about grace, that she and her bard have little regard, for the taste and fashions, and ruling passions, and hoidcning play, of the modern day; and though she assume a borrowed plume, and now and then wear a tittering air, 'tis only her plan, to catch if she can, the giddy and gay, as they go that way, by a production on a new construction. She has baited her trap in hopes to snap all that may come, with a sugar-plum"—His opinion in this, will not be amiss, 'tis what I intend, my principal end; and if I succeed, and folks should read, till a few are brought to a serious thought, I shall think I am paid, for all I have said, and all I have done, though I have run, many a time, after a rhyme, as far as from hence, to the end of my sense, and by hook or crook, write another book, if I live and am here, another year

I have heard before, of a room with a floor, laid upon springs, and such like things, with so much art, in every part, that when you went in, you was forced to begin a minute pace, with an air and grace, swimming about, now out, with a deal of state, in a figure of eight, without pipe or string, or any such thing, and now I have writ, in a rhyming fit, what will make you dance, and as you advance, will keep you still, though against your will, dancing away, alert and gay, till you come to an end of what I have penn'd, which that you may do, ere Madam and you are quite worn out with jiggng about, I take my leave, and here you receive a bow profound, down to the ground, from your humble me—

W C

P S When I concluded, doubtless you did think me right, as well you might, in saying what I said of Scott, and then it was true, but now it is due, to him to note, that since I wrote, himself and he has visited we*

*This letter was first printed entire in the Memoir of Cowper, prefixed to the edition of his poems among the Aldine Poets; the most judicious memoir and the best arranged edition that has yet appeared.

CLXV

SLOW PROGRESS IN THE PRESS—EXCURSION
TO THE SPINNIE

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 22, 1781

I AM sensible of your difficulties in finding opportunities to write, and therefore, though always desirous and sometimes impatient to hear from you, am never peevish when I am disappointed. We thank you for the letters. The noble Divine is sensible though angry, and the Divine Captain always consistent with himself. What you relate of the unhappy Epsomite is truly shocking, when men cannot find the true remedy they often have recourse to one that is worse than the disease, and a worse than he has found, if the fact be such, it is not in the power of quackery to recommend. How wonderful 'that a man can suppose himself employed under God's blessing as a discoverer of truth, while he himself is entangled in the worst of errors, a practical departure from it. If a traveller were lost in a labyrinth and in the course of his wanderings should stumble upon a vessel of intoxicating liquor, he could hardly do worse than drink it, or more effectually insure his own destruction.

Johnson having begun to print, has given me some sort of security for his perseverance, else, the tardiness of his operations would almost tempt me to despair of the end. He has, indeed, time enough before him, but that very circumstance is sometimes a snare, and gives occasion to delays that cannot be remedied. Witness the hare in the fable who fell asleep in the midst of the race, and waked not till the tortoise had won the prize.

Taking it for granted that the new marriage-bill would pass, I took occasion, in the Address to Liberty, to celebrate the joyful era, but in doing so afforded another proof that poets are not always prophets, for the House of Lords have thrown it out. I am, however, provided with four lines to fill up the gap, which I suppose it will be time enough to insert when the copy is sent down. I am in the middle of an affair called *Conversation*, which, as *Table Talk* serves in the present volume by way of introductory fiddle to

the band that follows, I design shall perform the same office in a second.

Sic brevis fortis jocularum ævo

Our excursion to the Spinnie, which I mentioned in the hope o' my thumb lines I sent you, took place yesterday. The weather was just such as it would have been if we had had the choice of it, perhaps better, for of all things in the world we find it sometimes most difficult to please ourselves. We dined in the root-house. Our great wheelbarrow, which may be called a first-rate in its kind, conveyed all our stores, and afterwards, with the assistance of a board laid over it, made us a very good table. We set off at one, and were at home again soon after eight. I never made one in a party of pleasure that answered so well. We separated before we grew weary of each other, which is a happiness seldom enjoyed upon such occasion, we were seven in company, including Hannah, who, though highly delighted with her aunt, was not at all more pleased than her elders. She is as much delighted to-day with the acquisition of a sister born last night, but whether the rest of that noble family will have equal cause to rejoice in the event, is uncertain. Should she be followed by a troop, unless they practice Dean Swift's recommended method for the maintenance of the poor, it is not easy to say where they will find vituals, certainly not at Olney.

You cannot always find time to write, and I cannot always write a great deal, not for want of time, but for want of something equally requisite, perhaps materials, perhaps spirits, or perhaps more frequently for want of ability to overcome an indolence that I have sometimes heard even you complain of.

I beg you will remember me to Mrs Cowper. We are very sorry to hear of Mrs. Newton's indisposition. Mr Wight, who called here three times before he could find me at home, informed me, the day before yesterday, that poor Lord Dartmouth grows worse. His account of him is indeed a most unfavourable one.

Thanks for the cocoanuts and the slide. Mrs Unwin joins love to both. The summer being so far advanced,

She and her sublimity
Will do without dimity

Yours, my dear Sir, and Mrs Newton's, W C

CLXVI

**WHETHER IT BE BETTER TO SUBMIT TO INJURIES
OR SEEK LEGAL REDRESS—PARTY IN THE
SPINNIE.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 29 1781

HAVING given the case you laid before me in your last all due consideration, I proceed to answer it, and in order to clear my way, shall, in the first place, set down my sense of those passages in Scripture which, on a hasty perusal, seem to clash with the opinion I am going to give—"If a man smite one cheek, turn the other"—"If he take thy cloak, let him take thy coat also" That is, I suppose, rather than on a vindictive principle avail yourself of that remedy the law allows you, in the way of retaliation, for that was the subject immediately under the discussion of the speaker Nothing is so contrary to the genius of the Gospel, as the gratification of resentment and revenge, but I cannot easily persuade myself to think, that the author of that dispensation could possibly advise his followers to consult their own peace at the expense of the peace of society, or inculcate a universal abstinence from the use of lawful remedies, to the encouragement of injury and oppression

St Paul again seems to condemn the practice of going to law, "Why do you not rather suffer wrong?" &c But if we look again, we shall find that a litigious temper had obtained, and was prevalent among the professors of the day This he condemned, and with good reason, it was unseemly to the last degree, that the disciples of the Prince of Peace should worry and vex each other with injurious treatment, and unnecessary disputes, to the scandal of their religion in the eyes of the heathen But surely he did not mean any more than his Master, in the place above alluded to, that the most harmless members of society should

receive no advantage of its laws, or should be the only persons in the world who should derive no benefit from those institutions, without which society cannot subsist. Neither of them could mean to throw down the pale of property and to lay the Christian part of the world open, throughout all ages, to the incursions of unlimited violence and wrong.

By this time you are sufficiently aware, that I think you have an indisputable right to recover at law what is so dishonestly withheld from you. The fellow, I suppose, has discernment enough to see a difference between you and the generality of the clergy, and cunning enough to conceive the purpose of turning your meekness and forbearance to good account, and of coining them into hard cash, which he means to put in his pocket. But I would disappoint him, and show him, that though a Christian is not to be quarrelsome, he is not to be crushed, and that though he is but a worm before God, he is not such a worm as every selfish unprincipled wretch which may tread upon at his pleasure.

I lately heard a story from a lady, who has spent many years of her life in France, somewhat to the present purpose. An Abbe, universally esteemed for his piety, and especially for the meekness of his manners, had yet undesignedly given some offence to a shabby fellow in his parish. The man, concluding he might do as he pleased with so forgiving and gentle a character, struck him on one cheek, and bade him turn the other. The good man did so, and when he had received the two slaps, which he thought himself obliged to submit to, turned again, and beat him soundly. I do not wish to see you follow the French gentleman's example, but I believe nobody that has heard the story condemns him much for the spirit he showed upon the occasion.

I had the relation from Lady Austen, sister to Mrs Jones, wife of the minister at Clifton. She is a most agreeable woman, and has fallen in love with your mother and me, insomuch, that I do not know but she may settle at Olney. Yesterday se'nnight we all dined together in the *Spinnie*—a most delightful retirement, belonging to Mrs

Throckmorton of Weston. Lady Austen's lackey, and a lad that waits on me in the garden, drove a wheelbarrow full of eatables and drinkables to the scene of our *fête Champêtre*. A board laid over the top of the wheelbarrow served us for a table, our dining-room was a root-house lined with moss and ivy. At six o'clock, the servants, who had dined under a great elm upon the ground, at a little distance, boiled the kettle, and the said wheelbarrow served us for a tea-table. We then took a walk into the wilderness, about half a mile off, and were at home again a little after eight, having spent the day together from noon till evening without one cross occurrence, or the least weariness of each other. A happiness few parties of pleasure can boast of.

Yours, with our joint love,

W C

CLXVII.

**THANKS FOR AN ACCOUNT OF HIS FAMILY —
ASHLEY COWPER—REMARKS ON FASHION**

TO MRS NEWTON

DEAR MADAM,

Aug 1781

THOUGH much obliged to you for the favour of your last, and ready enough to acknowledge the debt, the present, however, is not a day in which I should have chosen to pay it. A dejection of mind, which perhaps may be removed by to-morrow, rather disqualifies me for writing, a business I would always perform in good spirits, because melancholy is catching especially where there is much sympathy to assist the contagion. But certain poultry, which I understand are about to pay their respects to you, have advertised for an agreeable companion, and I find myself obliged to embrace the opportunity of going to town with them in that capacity.

I thank you for your little abridgment of my family's history. Like every thing that relates to the present world, in which there seems to be nearly an equal mixture of the lamentable and ridiculous, it affords both occasion to laugh and to cry. In this single instance of my uncle, I can see cause for both. He trembles upon the verge of fourscore—a white hat that with a yellow lining is no indication

to wisdom suitable to so great an age, he can go but one step farther in the road of impropriety, and direct his executor to bury him in it. He is a very little man, and had he lined his hat with pink instead of yellow, might have been gathered by a natural mistake for a mushroom, and sent off in a basket.

While the world lasts, fashion will continue to lead it by the nose. And, after all, what can fashion do for its most obsequious followers? It can ring the changes, upon the same things, and it can do no more. Whether our hats be white or black, our caps high or low,—whether we wear two watches or one—is of little consequence. There is indeed an appearance of variety, but the folly and vanity that dictate, and adopts the change, are invariably the same. When the fashions of a particular period appear more reasonable than those of the preceding, it is not because the world is grown more reasonable than it was, but because in a course of perpetual changes, some of them must sometimes happen to be for the better. Neither do I suppose the preposterous customs that prevail at present, a proof of its greater folly. In a few years perhaps next year, the fine gentleman will shut up his umbrella, and give it to his sister, filling his hand with a crab tree cudgel instead of it—and when he has done so, will he be wiser than now? By no means. The love of change will have betrayed him into a propriety, which, in reality, he has no taste, for, all his merit on the occasion amounting to no more than this— that, being weary of one playing, he has taken up another.

In a note I received from Johnson last week, he expresses a wish that my pen may be still employed. Supposing it possible that he would yet be glad to swell the volume, I have given him an order to draw upon me for eight hundred lines, if he chooses it, *Conversation*, a piece which I think I mentioned in my last to Mr Newton, being finished. If Johnson sends for it, I shall transcribe it as soon as I can, and transmit it to Charles Square. Mr Newton will take the trouble to forward it to the press. It is not a dialogue, as the title would lead you to surmise, nor does it bear the least resemblance to *Table Talk*, ex-

cept that it is serio-comic, like all the rest. My design in it is to convince the world that they make but an in-different use of their tongues, considering the intention of Providence when he endued them with the faculty of speech, to point out the abuses, which is the jocular part of the business, and to prescribe the remedy, which is the grave and sober.

We felt ourselves not the less obliged to you for the cornnuts, though they were good for nothing. They contained nothing but a putrid liquor, with a round white lump, which in taste and substance much resembled tallow, and was of the size of a small walnut. Nor am I the less indebted to your kindness for the fish, though none is yet come. Mrs. Unwin does not forget the eggs, but while the harvest continues puddings are in such request, that the farmers will not part with them.

Our joint love to both, and to Miss Catlett, if at home. Sir's letter, for which I thank him, shall have an answer as soon as possible.

Yours, dear madam,

Most affectionately, W. C.

CLXVIII

GREENHOUSE CONVERTED INTO A SUMMER PARLOUR - PROGRESS IN THE PRESS.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug 16, 1791

I MIGHT date my letter from the greenhouse, which we have converted into a summer parlour. The walls hung with garden mats, and the floor covered with a carpet, the sun too in a great measure excluded, by an awing of mats which forbids him to shine anywhere except upon the carpet, it affords us by far the pleasantest retreat in Olney. We eat, drink, and sleep, where we always did, but here we spend all the rest of our time, and find that the sound of the wind in the trees, and the singing of birds, are much more agreeable to our ears than the incessant barking of dogs and screaming of children. * Not to mention

the exchange of a sweet smelling garden, for the putrid exhalations of Silver End. It is an observation that naturally occurs upon the occasion, and which many other occasions furnish an opportunity to make, that people long for what they have not, and overlook the good in their possession. This is so true in the present instance, that for years past I should have thought myself happy to enjoy a retirement even less flattering to my natural taste than this in which I am now writing, and have often looked wistfully at a snug cottage, which, on account of its situation at a distance from noise and disagreeable objects, seemed to promise me all I could wish or expect, so far as happiness may be said to be local, never once adverting to this comfortable nook, which affords me all that could be found in the most sequestered hermitage, with the advantage of having all those accommodations near at hand which no hermitage could possibly afford me. People imagine they should be happy in circumstances which they would find insupportably burthensome in less than a week. A man that has been clothed in fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, envies the peasant under a thatched hovel, who, in return, envies him as much his palace and his pleasure-ground. Could they change situations, the fine gentleman would find his ceilings were too low, and that his casements admitted too much wind, that he had no cellar for his wine, and no wine to put in his cellar. These, with a thousand other mortifying deficiencies, would shatter his romantic project into innumerable fragments in a moment. The clown, at the same time, would find the accession of so much unwieldy treasure an incumbrance quite incompatible with an hour's ease. His choice would be puzzled by variety. He would drink to excess, because he would foresee no end of his abundance, and he would eat himself sick for the same reason. He would have no idea of any other happiness than sensual gratification, would make himself a beast, and die of his good fortune. The rich gentleman had, perhaps, or might have had, if he pleased, at the shortest notice, just such a recess as this; but if he had it, he overlooked it, or, if he had it not, forgot that he might command it whenever he would. The

rustic too, was actually in possession of some blessings, which he was a fool to relinquish, but which he could neither see nor feel, because he had the daily and constant use of them, such as good health, bodily strength, a head and a heart that never ached, and temperance, to the practice of which he was bound by necessity, that, humanly speaking, was a pledge and a security for the continuance of them all

This I have sent you a schoolboy's theme. When I write to you, I do not write without thinking, but always without premeditation. the consequence is, that such thoughts as pass through my head when I am not writing, make the subject of my letters to you.

Johnson sent me lately a sort of apology for his printer's negligence, with his promise of greater diligence for the future. There was need enough of both. I have received but one sheet since you left us. Still, indeed, I see that there is time enough before us, but I see likewise that no length of time can be sufficient for the accomplishment of a work that does not go forward. I know not yet whether he will add *Conversation* to those poems already in his hands nor do I care much. No man ever wrote such quantities of verse, as I have written this last year, with so much indifference about the event, or rather, with so little ambition of public praise. My pieces are such as may possibly be made useful. The more they are approved, the more likely they are to spread, and consequently to attain the end of usefulness, which, as I said once before, except my present amusement, as the only end I propose. And even in the pursuit of this purpose, commendable as it is in itself, I have not the spur I should once have had,—my labour must go unrewarded, and as Mr. Raban once said, I am raising a scaffold before a house that others are to live in, and not I.

I have left myself no room for politics, which I thought, when I began, would have been my principal theme.

Mr Symond's letters certainly are not here. Our servants never touch a paper without leave, and are so observant of our injunction in this particular, that unless I burn the covers of the news, they accumulate till they make a litter.

Yours, my dear Sir, WM. COWPER.

CLXIX.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIS STATE OF MIND AND
MR. NEWTON'S. LADY AUSTEN'S INTENTION
OF RESIDING AT OLNEY—RHYMES TO
MR. NEWTON

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug 21, 1781.

You wish you could employ your time to better purpose, yet are never idle. In all that you say or do, whether you are alone, or pay visits, or receive them, whether you think or write, or walk or sit still, the state of your mind is such as discovers, even to yourself, in spite of all its wanderings, that there is a principle at bottom whose determined tendency is towards the best things. I do not at all doubt the truth of what you say, when you complain of that crowd of trifling thoughts that pesters you without ceasing, but then you always have a serious thought standing at the door of your imagination, like a justice of peace with the riot-act in his hand, ready to read it, and disperse the mob. Here lies the difference between you and me. My thoughts are clad in a sober livery, for the most part as grave as that of a bishop's servants. They turn too upon spiritual subjects, but the tallest fellow and the loudest among them all, is he who is continually crying with a loud voice, *Actum est de te, peristi!* You wish for more attention, I for less. Dissipation itself would be welcome to me, so it were not a vicious one, but however earnestly invited, is coy, and keeps at a distance. Yet with all this distressing gloom upon my mind, I experience, as you do, the slipperiness of the present hour, and the rapidity with which time escapes me. Every thing around us, and every thing that befalls us, constitutes a variety which, whether agreeable or otherwise, has still a thievish propensity, and steals from us days, months, and years with such unparalleled address, that even while we say they are here, they are gone. From infancy to manhood is rather a tedious period, chiefly, I suppose, because at that time we act under the control of others, and are not suffered to have a will of our own. But thence downward into the vale of years, is such a de-

clivity, that we have just an opportunity to reflect upon the steepness of it, and then find ourselves at the bottom

Here is a new scene opening, which, whether it perform what it promises or not, will add fresh plumes to the wings of time, at least while it continues to be a subject of contemplation. If the project take effect, a thousand varieties will attend the change it will make in our situation at Olney. If not, it will serve, however, to speculate and converse upon, and steal away many hours, by engaging our attention, before it be entirely dropped. Lady Austen, very desirous of retirement, especially of a retirement near her sister, an admirer of Mr Scott as a preacher, and of your two humble servants now in the green-house, as the most agreeable creatures in the world, is at present determined to settle here. That part of our great building which is at present occupied by Dick Coleman, his wife, child, and a thousand rats, is the corner of the world she chooses, above all others, as the place of her future residence. Next spring twelve month she begins to repair and beautify, and the following winter (by which time the lease of her house in town will determine) she intends to take possession. I am highly pleased with the plan, or Mrs Unwin's account, who since Mrs Newton's departure, is destitute of all female connexion, and has not, in any emergency, a woman to speak to. Mrs Scott is indeed in the neighbourhood, and an excellent person, but always engaged by a close attention to her family, and no more than ourselves a lover of visiting. But these things are all at present in the clouds. Two years must intervene, and in two years not only this project, but all the projects in Europe may be disconcerted

Cocoa-nut naught,
Fish to dear,
None must be bought
For us that are here

No lobster on earth,
That ever I saw,
To me would be worth
Sixpence a claw

So, dear madam wait
Till fish can be got

At a reasonable rate,
Whether lobster or not;
Till the French and the Dutch
Have quitted the seas,
And then send as much
And as oft as you please.

Yours, my dear Sir,

W C

CLXX

OLNEY NEWS—JOHNSON'S USEFUL SUGGESTIONS

TO THE VEW JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug 25, 1781.

By Johnson's last note (for I have received a packet from him since I wrote last to you) I am ready to suspect that you have seen him, and endeavoured to quicken his proceedings. His assurance of greater expedition leads me to think so. I know little of booksellers and printers, but have heard from others that they are the most dilatory of all people, otherwise, I am not in a hurry, nor would be so troublesome but am obliged to you nevertheless for your interference, if his promised alacrity be owing to any spur that you have given him. He chooses to add *Conversation* to the rest, and says he will give me notice when he is ready for it but I shall send it to *you* by the first opportune conveyance, and beg you to deliver it over to him. He wishes me not to be afraid of making the volume too large, by which expression I suppose he means, that if I had still another piece, there would be room for it. At present I have not, but am in the way to produce another, *favens modò Musa*. I have already begun and proceeded a little way in a poem called *Retirement*. My view in choosing that subject is to direct to the proper use of the opportunities it affords for the cultivation of a man's best interests, to censure the vices and the follies which people carry with them into their retreats, where they make no other use of their leisure than to gratify themselves with the indulgence of their favourite appetites, and

to pay themselves, by a life of pleasure, for a life of business. In conclusion, I would enlarge upon the happiness of that, when discreetly enjoyed and religiously improved. But all this is, at present, in embryo. I generally despair of my progress when I begin, but if, like my travelling squire, I should kindle as I go, this likewise may make a part of the volume, for I have time enough before me.

Susan Roberts has been supposed dying for some time, was speechless for a week, then grew better, was seized with violent convulsions, and is again grown better. Mr Scott is recovered, though when we paid him our last morning visit we found him a little disconcerted by the brutality and profaneness of a drunken fellow whom he had just been joking with a pregnant lady. The church was filled with idle folks upon the occasion, who could not be persuaded to behave with any degree of decency or decorum, and the wretch himself was as insolent as ignorance and strong drink could make him.

I forgot to mention that Johnson uses the discretion my poetship has allowed him, with much discernment. He has suggested several alterations, or rather marked several defective passages, which I have corrected, much to the advantage of the poems. In the last sheet he sent me, he noted three such, all which I have reduced into better order. In the foregoing sheet, I assented to his criticisms in some instances, and chose to abide by the original expression in others. Thus we jog on together comfortably enough, and perhaps it would be as well for authors in general, if their booksellers, when men of some taste, were allowed, though not to tinker the work themselves, yet to point out the flaws, and humbly to recommend an improvement.

The embargo I would have laid upon the present of fish reached you, I find, too late, and we are now to return our thanks for three pair of fine soles, on which we feasted noon and night but I beg that said embargo may have its effect in future, and that Mr Newton will not think of sending more till the price is fallen. Once more love, thanks, and adieu!

Yours,

WM COWPER

CLXXI

CONGRATULATIONS ON THE BIRTH OF A SON—
POEM ON RETIREMENT IN HAND IN HAND
LADY AUSTEN.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

August 25, 1781,

We rejoice with you sincerely in the birth of another son, and in the prospect you have of Mrs Unwin's recovery, may your three children, and the next three, when they shall make their appearance, prove so many blessings to their parents, and make you wish that you had twice the number. But what made you expect daily that you should hear from me? Letter for letter is the law of all correspondence whatsoever, and because I wrote last, I have indulged myself for some time in expectation of a sheet from you. Not that I govern myself entirely by the punctilio of reciprocity, but having been pretty much occupied of late, I was not sorry to find myself at liberty to exercise my discretion, and furnished with a good excuse if I chose to be silent.

I expected, as you remember, to have been published last spring, and was disappointed. The delay has afforded me an opportunity to increase the quantity of my publication by about a third, and if my muse has not forsaken me, which I rather suspect to be the case, may possibly yet add to it. I have a subject in hand, which promises me a great abundance of poetical matter, by which, for want of a something I am not able to describe, I cannot at present proceed with. The name of it is "*Retirement*," and my purpose, to recommend the proper improvement of it, to set forth the requisites for that end, and to enlarge upon the happiness of that state of life, when managed as it ought to be. In the course of my journey through this ample theme, I should wish to touch upon the characters, the deficiencies, and the mistakes of thousands, who enter on a scene of retirement, unqualified for it in every respect, and with such designs as have no tendency to promote either their own happiness or that of others. But as I have told you before, "there are times when I am no more a

poet than I am a mathematician, and when such a time occurs, I always think it better to give up the point, than to labour it in vain. I shall yet again be obliged to trouble you for franks, the addition of three thousand lines, or near that number, having occasioned a demand which I did not always foresee but your obliging friend, and your obliging self, having allowed me the liberty of application, I make it without apology.

The solitude, or rather the duality of our condition at Olney, seems drawing to a conclusion. You have not forgot, perhaps, that the building we inhabit consists of two mansions. And because you have only seen the inside of that part of it which is in our occupation, I therefore inform you, that the other end of it is by far the most superb, as well as the most commodious. Lady Austen has seen it, has set her heart upon it, is going to fit it up and furnish it, and if she can get rid of the remaining two years of the lease of her London house, will probably enter upon it in a twelve month. You will be pleased with this intelligence, because I have already told you, that she is a woman perfectly well bred, sensible, and in every respect agreeable, and above all, because she loves your mother dearly. It has in my eyes, (and I doubt not it will have the same in yours,) strong marks of providential interposition. A female friend, and one who bids fair to prove herself worthy of the appellation, comes, recommended by a variety of considerations, to such a place as Olney. Since Mr Newton went, and till this lady came, there was not in the kingdom a retirement more absolutely such than ours. We did not want company, but when it came, we found it agreeable. A person that has seen much of the world, and understands it well, has high spirits, a lively fancy, and great readiness of conversation, introduces a sprightliness into such a scene as this, which, if it was peaceful before, is not the worse for being a little enlivened. In case of illness too, to which all are liable, it was rather a gloomy prospect, if we allowed ourselves to advert to it, that there was hardly a woman in the place from whom it would have been reasonable to have expected either comfort or assistance. The present curate's wife is a valuable

person, but has a family of her own, and though a neighbour, is not a very near one. But if this plan is effected we shall be in a manner one family, and I suppose never pass a day without some intercourse with each other.

Your mother sends her warm affections, and welcomes in to the world the new-born William

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

CLXXII

OCUIDUS—OPINIONS ON THE USE AND ABUSE OF MUSIC

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 9, 1781.

I AM not willing to let the post set off without me, though I have nothing material to put into his bag. I am writing in the greenhouse, where my myrtles, ranged before the windows, make the most agreeable blind imaginable, where I am undisturbed by noise, and where I see none but pleasing objects. The situation is as favourable to my purpose as I could wish, but the state of my mind is not so, and the deficiencies I feel there are not to be remedied by the stillness of my retirement, or the beauty of the scene before me. I believe it is in part owing to the excessive heat of the weather, that I find myself so much at a loss when I attempt either verse or prose: my animal spirits are depressed, and dulness is the consequence. That dulness, however, is all at your service, and the portion of it that is necessary to fill up the present epistle, I send you without the least reluctance.

I am sorry to find that the censure I have passed upon Ocuidus is even better founded than I supposed. Lady Austen has been at his sabbatical concerts, which it seems are composed of song-tunes and psalm-tunes indiscriminately, music without words—and I suppose one may say, consequently, without devotion. On a certain occasion, when her niece was sitting at her side, she asked his opinion concerning the lawfulness of such amusements as are to be found

at Vauxhall or Ranelagh, meaning only to draw from him a sentence of disapprobation, that Miss Green might be the better reconciled to the restraint under which she was held, when she found it warranted by the judgment of so famous a divine. But she was disappointed—he accounted, them innocent, and recommended them as useful. Curiosity, he said, was natural to young persons, and it was wrong to deny them a gratification which they might be indulged in with the greatest safety, because the denial being unreasonable, the desire of it would still subsist. It was but a walk and a walk was as harmless in one place as another, with other arguments of a similar import, which might have proceeded with more grace, at least with less offence, from the lips of a sensual layman. He seems, together with others of our acquaintance, to have suffered considerably in his spiritual character by his attachment to music. The lawfulness of it, when used with moderation, and in its proper place, is unquestionable, but I believe that wine itself, though a man be guilty of habitual intoxication, does not more debauch and befool the natural understanding, than music, always music, music in season and out of season, weakens and destroys the spiritual discernment. If it is not used with an unfeigned reference to the worship of God, and with a design to assist the soul in the performance of it, which cannot be the case when it is the only occupation, it degenerates into a sensual delight, and becomes a most powerful advocate for the admission of other pleasure, grosser perhaps in degree, but in their kind the same.

Mr Monk, though a simple, honest, good man—such, at least, he appears to us—is not likely to give general satisfaction. He preaches the truth, it seems, but not the whole truth, and a certain member of that church, who signed the letter of invitation, which was conceived in terms sufficiently encouraging, is likely to prove one of his most strenuous opposers. The little man, however, has an independent fortune, and has nothing to do but to trundle himself away to some other place, where he may find hearers, neither so nice nor so wise as we are at Olney.

Yours, my dear Sir,
with our united love, W. C.

CLXXIII.

AN EPISTLE IN VERSE CONCERNING A BARREL
OF OYSTERS.

TO MRS. NEWTON.

Sept, 16, 1781

A NOBLE theme demands a noble verse,
 In such I thank you for your fine oysters.
 The barrel was magnificently large,
 But being sent to Olney at free charge,
 Was not inserted in the driver's list,
 And therefore overlook'd, forgot, or miss'd ;
 For when the messenger whom we despatch'd
 Enquired for oysters, Hob his noddle scratch'd.
 Denying that his waggon or his wain
 Did any such commodity contain
 In consequence of which, your welcome boon
 Did not arrive till yesterday at noon ;
 In consequence of which some chanced to die,
 And some though very sweet, were very dry,
 Now Madam says, (and what she says must still
 Deserve attention, say she what she will,)
 That we call the Diligence, be case
 It goes to London with a swifter pace,
 Would better suit the carriage of your gift,
 Returning downward with a pace as swift ;
 And therefore recommends it with this aim —
 To save at least three days, — the price the same ;
 For though it will not carry or convey
 For less than twelve pence, send whate'er you may.
 For oysters bred upon the salt sea shore,
 Pack'd in a barrel, they will charge no more.

News have I none that I can deign to write,
 Save that it rain'd prodigiously last night ;
 And that ourselves were, at the seventh hour,
 Caught in the first beginning of the shower ;
 But walking, running, and with much ado,
 Got home — just time enough to be wet through.
 Yet both are well, and wond'rous to be told,
 Roused as we were, we yet have caught no cold ;
 And wishing just the same good hap to you,
 We say, good Madam, and good Sir, Adieu !

CLXXIV.

IN REPLY TO SOME OF HIS CRITICAL
ANIMADVERSIONS

TO MR JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER

SIR,

Sept. 26, 1781

By your not mentioning it, I suppose you have not yet received *Conversation*, shall be glad to know it when you have *Retirement* is grown to about five hundred lines, so that I begin to hope I shall reach the end of it

"Cry aloud," &c

Though the verse has rather an unusual run, I chose to begin it in that manner for the sake of animation, and am not able to alter it without flattening its energy quite away

"Providence ulverse," &c

The reduplication of those words was a point I rather laboured for the sake of emphasis and the transposition of them strikes me as artful, and as having an agreeable effect upon the ear

"Cured of golden calves," &c

The expression has a figurative boldness in it, which appears to me poetical

All your other marks have been attended to, and I thank you for them

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient,

WM COWPER.

CLXXV.

THANKS FOR THE PREFACE—DR. JOHNSON—
WATTS—COWPER A CAREFUL WRITER—
MR. NEWTON'S HABIT OF SMOKING

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The Greenhouse, Sept 18, 1781

I RETURN your preface, with many thanks for so affectionate an introduction to the public I have observed nothing that in my judgment required alteration, except a

single sentence in the first paragraph, which I have not obliterated, that you may restore it if you please, by obliterating my interlineation. My reason for proposing an amendment of it was, that your meaning did not strike me, which therefore I have endeavoured to make more obvious. The rest is what I would wish it to be. You say, indeed, more in my commendation, than I can modestly say of myself, but something will be allowed to the partiality of friendship, on so interesting an occasion.

I have no objection in the world to your conveying a copy to Dr Johnson, though I well know that one of his pointed sarcasms, if he should happen to be displeased, would soon find its way into all companies, and spoil the sale. He writes, indeed, like a man that thinks a great deal, and that sometimes thinks religiously, but report informs me that he has been severe enough in his animadversion upon Dr Watts, who was nevertheless, if I am in any degree a judge of verse, a man of true poetical ability, careless, indeed, for the most part, and inattentive too often to those niceties which constitute elegance of expression, but frequently sublime in his conceptions, and masterly in his execution. Pope, I have heard, had placed him once in the Dunciad, but on being advised to read before he judged him, was convinced that he deserved other treatment and thrust somebody's blockhead into the gap, whose name, consisting of a monosyllable, happened to fit it. Whatever faults, however, I may be chargeable with as a poet, I cannot accuse myself of negligence. I never suffer a line to pass till I have made it as good as I can; and though my doctrines may offend this king of critics, he will not, I flatter myself, be disgusted by slovenly inaccuracy, either in the numbers, rhymes, or language. Let the rest take its chance. It is possible he may be pleased, and if he should, I shall have engaged on my side one of the best trumpeters in the kingdom. Let him only speak as favourably of me as he has spoken of Sir Richard Blackmore (who, though he shines in his poem called *Creation*, has written more absurdities in verse than any writer of our country), and my success will be secured.

I have often promised myself a laugh with you about your

pipe, but have always forgotten it when I have been writing, and at present I am not much in a laughing humour. You will observe, however, for your comfort and the honour of that same pipe, that it hardly falls within the line of my censure. You never fumigate the ladies, or force them out of company, nor do you use it as an incentive to hard drinking. Your friends, indeed, have reason to complain that it frequently deprives them of the pleasure of your own conversation while it leads you either into your study or your garden, but in all other respects it is as innocent a pipe as can be. Smoke away, therefore, and remember that if one poet has condemned the practice, a better than he (the witty and elegant Hawkins Browne,) has been warm in the praise of it.

Retirement grows, but more slowly than any of its predecessors. Time was when I could with ease produce fifty, sixty, or seventy lines in a morning; now, I generally fall short of thirty, and am sometimes forced to be content with a dozen. It consists at present, I suppose, of between six and seven hundred, so that there are hopes of an end, and I dare say Johnson will give me time enough to finish it.

I nothing add but this—that still I am
Your most affectionate and humble WILLIAM.

CLXXVI.

THE SEA—LADY AUSTEN.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 26, 1781

I MAY I suppose, congratulate you on your safe arrival at Bournemouth, and am the better pleased with your design to close the summer there, because I am acquainted with the place, and, by the assistance of fancy, can without much difficulty join himself to the party, and partake with you in your amusements and excursions. It happened singularly enough, that just before I received your last, in which you apprize me of your intended journey, I had been writing upon the subject, having found occasion towards the close of my last poem, called *Retirement* to take some notice of the modern passion for sea-side entertain-

ments, and to direct to the means by which they might be made useful as well as agreeable I think with you, that the most magnificent object under heaven is the great deep, and cannot but feel an unpolite species of astonishment, when I consider the multitudes that view it without emotion, and even without reflection In all its various forms, it is an object of all others the most suited to affect us with lasting impressions of the awful Power that created and controls it. I am the less inclined to think this negligence excusable, because, at a time of life when I gave as little attention to religious subjects as almost any man, I yet remember that the waves would preach to me, and that in the midst of dissipation I had an ear to hear them One of Shakspeare's characters says,—“I am never merry when I hear sweet music” The same effect that harmony seems to have had upon him, I have experienced from the sight and sound of the ocean, which have often composed my thoughts into a melancholy not unpleasant, nor without its use So much for *Signor Nettuno*

Lady Austen goes to London this day se'nnight We have told her that you shall visit her, which is an enterprise you may engage in with the more alacrity, because as she loves every thing that has any connexion with your mother, she is sure to feel a sufficient partiality for her son Add to this, that your own personal recommendations are by no means small, or such as a woman of her fine taste and discernment can possibly overlook She has many features in her character which you will admire; but one, in particular, on account of the rarity of it, will engage your attention and esteem She has a degree of gratitude in her composition, so quick a sense of obligation, as is hardly to be found in any rank of life, and, if report say true, is scarce indeed in the superior Discover but a wish to please her, and she never forgets it, not only thanks you, but the tears will start into her eyes at the recollection of the smallest service With these fine feelings, she has the most, and the most harmless vivacity you can imagine In short, she is—what you will find her to be, upon half an hour's conversation with her; and when I hear you have a journey to town in contemplation, I will send you her address,

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

239

Your mother is well, and joins with me in wishing that
you may spend your time agreeably upon the coast of
Sussex.
Yours, W. C.

CLXXVII.

**UPON FINISHING RETIREMENT, HE GRANTS HIM-
SELF A RESPITE, AND MEANS TO AWAIT
THE SUCCESS OF HIS VOLUME.**

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER

SIR,

October 1, 1781.

I EXPECT to finish *Retirement* in a day or two, and as
soon as transcribed I shall forward it to Mr. Newton This
addition, I think, will swell the volume to a respectable
size, consisting, as I guess, of between seven and eight
hundred lines I may now grant myself a respite, and
watch the success of the present undertaking, determining
myself by the event, whether to resume my occupation as
an author or drop it for ever

I am, Sir, Your most obedient Servant, WM. COWPER.

CLXXVIII

**A DRAFT—COWPER PROPOSES TO SELL HIS CHAM-
BERS—RETIREMENT FINISHED.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 3, 1781.

YOUR draft is worded for twenty pounds, and figured for
twenty-one I thought it more likely the mistake should
be made in the figures than in the words, and have sent
you a receipt accordingly I am obliged to you for it, and
am no less bound to acknowledge your kindness in thinking
for a man so little accustomed to think for himself. The
result of my deliberations on the subject proposed is, that
it will be better, on many accounts, to sell the chambers,
and to deposit the money in the funds Public credit
wants a lift, and I would willingly shew my readiness to
afford it one at so critical a juncture. If you can sell

Morgan at the same time, so as to turn him to any account, you have my free leave to do it. It has been a dry summer, and frogs may possibly be scarce, and fetch a good price, though how his frogship has attained to the honour of that appellation, at this distance from the scene of his activity, I am not able to conjecture.

I hope you had a pleasant vacation, and have laid in a fresh stock of health and spirits for the business of the approaching winter. As for me, I have just finished my last piece called *Retirement*⁸ which, as soon as it is fit to appear in public, shall, together with all the rest of its fraternity, lay itself at your feet.

My affectionate respects attend Mrs. Hill and yourself

Yours truly,

W C

CLXXIX

DR. JOHNSON AND WATTS—WILLING THAT MR. NEWTON'S NAME SHOULD APPEAR IN THE TITLE PAGE AS EDITOR.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 4, 1781

I GENERALLY write the day before the post, but yesterday had no opportunity, being obliged to employ myself in settling my greenhouse for the winter. I am now writing before breakfast, that I may avail himself of every inch of time for the purpose. N B An expression a critic would quarrel with, and call it by some hard name, signifying a jumble of ideas, and an unnatural match between time and space.

I am glad to be undeceived respecting the opinion I had been erroneously led into on the subject of Johnson's criticism on Watts. Nothing can be more judicious, or more characteristic of a distinguishing taste, than his observations upon that writer, though I think him a little mistaken in his notion, that divine subjects have never been poetically treated with success. A little more Christian knowledge and experience would perhaps enable him to discover excellent poetry, upon spiritual themes, in the aforesaid little Doctor. I perfectly acquiesce in the pro-

propriety of sending Johnson a copy of my productions ; and I think it would be well to send it in our joint names, accompanied with a handsome card, such an one as you will know how to fabricate, and such as may predispose him to a favourable perusal of the book, by coaxing him into a good temper, for he is a great bear, with all his learning and penetration.

I forgot to tell you in my last, that I was well pleased with your proposed appearance in the title page under the name of the editor. I do not care under how many names you appear in a book that calls me its author. In my last piece, which I finished the day before yesterday, I have told the public that I live upon the banks of the Ouse that public is a great simpleton if it does not know that you live in London ; it will consequently know that I had need of the assistance of some friend in town, and that I could have recourse to nobody with more propriety than yourself. I shall transcribe and submit to your approbation as fast as possible. I have now, I think, finished my volume, indeed I am almost weary of composing, having spent a year in doing nothing else. I reckon my volume will consist of about eight thousand lines. The season of dispatch which Johnson has so often promised is not yet arrived ; a fortnight, and sometimes three weeks elapse before I am supplied with a new sheet, the next brings us into the middle of Hope, which I account the middle of the volume, consequently, unless he proceeds with more celerity, the publishing moment will escape us this year, as it did the last : for his own sake, however, I should suppose he will catch it if he can, and be ready to exhibit by the meeting of Parliament after the Christmas recess.

Mrs. Unwin is well, and sends her love. Our thanks are due for a fine piece of skait and some prawns, both as fresh as when they took leave of their native element. We heartily wish Mrs. Newton better than *pretty* well, and the recovery of all the invalids in your family.

• Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CLXXX.

WAYS OF THE WORLD—FEELING WITH REGARD
TO THE APPROACHING PUBLICATION OF
HIS VOLUME.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct 6, 1781.

WHAT a world are you daily conversant with, which I have not seen these twenty years, and shall never see again! The arts of dissipation (I suppose) are no where practised with more refinement or success than at the place of your present residence. By your account of it, it seems to be just what it was when I visited it, a scene of idleness and luxury, music, dancing, cards, walking, riding, bathing, eating, drinking, coffee, tea, scandal, dressing, yawning, sleeping, the rooms, perhaps more magnificent, because the proprietors are grown richer, but the manners and occupations of the company just the same. Though my life has long been like that of a recluse, I have not the temper of one, nor am I in the least an enemy to cheefulness and good humour, but I cannot envy you your situation, I even feel myself constrained to prefer the silence of this nook, and the snug fire side in our own diminutive parlour, to all the splendour and gaiety of Brighton.

You ask me, how I feel on the occasion of my approaching publication. Perfectly at my ease. If I had not been pretty well assured before hand that my tranquillity would be but little endangered by such a measure, I would never have engaged in it, for I cannot bear disturbance. I have had in view two principal objects, first, to amuse myself,—and secondly, to compass that point in such a manner, that others might possibly be the better for my amusement. If I have succeeded, it will give me pleasure, but if I have failed, I shall not be mortified to the degree that might perhaps be expected. I remember an old adage, (though no where it is to be found,) "*bene vixit, qui bene latuit*," and if I had recollected it at the right time, it should have been the motto to my book. By the way, it will make an excellent one for Retirement, if you can but

tell, me whom to quote for it The critics cannot deprive me of the pleasure I have in reflecting, that so far as my leisure has been employed in writing for the public, it has been conscientiously employed, and with a view to their advantage There is nothing agreeable, to be sure, in being chronicled for a dunce, but I believe there lives not a man upon earth who would be less affected by it than myself. With all this indifference to fame, which you know me too well to suppose me capable of affecting, I have taken the utmost pains to deserve it This may appear a mystery or paradox in practice, but it is true I considered that the taste of the day is refined, and delicate to excess, and that to disgust the delicacy of taste, by a slovenly inattention to it, would be to forfeit at once all hope of being useful; and for this reason, though I have written more verse this last year than perhaps any man in England, I have finished, and polished, and touched, and retouched, with the utmost care If after all I should be converted into waste paper, it may be my misfortune, but it will not be my fault I shall bear it with the most perfect serenity

I do not mean to give——a copy he is a good-natured little man, and crows exactly like a cock, but knows no more of verse than the cock he imitates

Whoever supposes that Lady Austen's fortune is precarious, is mistaken. I can assure you, upon the ground of the most circumstantial and authentic information, that it is both genteel and perfectly safe Yours, W. C

C.LXXXI

LICENSE WHICH MEN CLAIM FOR THEMSELVES ON THE SCORE OF SUPPOSED GENIUS— AFFAIRS OF THE SUNDAY EVEN- ING MEETING AT ONLEY.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 14, 1781

I WOULD not willingly deprive you of any comfort, and therefore would wish you to comfort yourself as much as you can with a notion that you are a more bountiful correspondent

than I You will give me leave in the mean time, however, to assert to myself a share in the same species of consolation, and to enjoy the flattering recollection that I have sometimes written three letters to your one I never knew a poet, except myself, who was punctual in any thing, or to be depended on for the due discharge of any duty, except what he thought he owed to the Muses. The moment a man takes it into his foolish head that he has what the world calls Genius, he gives himself a discharge from the servile drudgery of all friendly offices, and becomes good for nothing, except in the pursuit of his favourite employment. But I am not yet vain enough to think myself entitled to such self-conferred honours, and though I have sent much poetry to the press, or, at least, what I hope my readers will account such, am still as desirous as ever of a place in your heart, and to take all opportunities to convince you that you have still the same in mine My attention to my poetical function has, I confess, a little interfered of late with my other employments, and occasioned my writing less frequently than I should have otherwise done But it is over, at least for the present, and I think for sometime to come I have transcribed *Retirement*, and send it You will be so good as to forward it to Johnson, who will forward it, I suppose, to the public, in his own time, but not very speedily, moving as he does The post brought me a sheet this afternoon, but we have not yet reached the end of *Hope*

Mr Scott, I perceive by yours to him, has mentioned one of his troubles, but I believe not the principal one The question, whether he shall have an assistant at the great house in Mr G Raban, is still a question, or, at least, a subject of discontent, between Mr Scott and the people In a *tête-à-tête* I had with this candidate for the chair, in the course of the last week, I told him my thoughts upon the subject plainly, advised him to change places, by the help of fancy, with Mr. Scott, for a moment, and to ask himself how *he* would like a self-intruded deputy, advised him likewise by no means to address Mr Scott any more upon the matter, for that he might be sure he would never consent to it, and concluded with telling

him, that if he persisted in his purpose of speaking to the people, the probable consequence would be, that sooner or later, Mr. Scott would be forced out of the parish, and the blame of his expulsion would all light upon him. He heard, approved and, I think the very next day, put all my good counsel to shame, at least a considerable part of it, by applying to Mr Scott, in company with Mr. Perry, for his permission to speak at the Sunday evening lecture Mr Scott, as I had foretold, was immovable, but offered, for the satisfaction of his hearers, to preach three times to them on the Sabbath, which he could have done, Mr Jones having kindly offered, though without their knowledge, to officiate for him at Weston Mr Raban answered, "That will not do, Sir, it is not what the people wish, they want variety" Mr Scott replied very wisely, "If they do, they must be content without it, it is not my duty to indulge that humour" This is the last intelligence I have had upon the subject I received it not from Mr Scott, but from an ear-witness.

I did not suspect, till the Reviewers told me so, that you are made up of artifice and design, and that your ambition is to delude your hearers Well—I suppose they please themselves with the thought of having mortified you, but how much are they mistaken! They shot at you, and their arrow struck the Bible, recoiling, of course, upon themselves My turn will come, for I think I shall hardly escape a threshing

Yours, my dear Sir,
and Mrs. Newton's, Wm. COWPER

CLXXXII

**DRIFT OF HIS POEMS—FEELINGS TOWARDS
THE DEAD.**

TO MRS COWPER

' MY DEAR COUSIN,

Oct. 19, 1781

Your fear lest I should think you unworthy of my correspondence, on account of your delay to answer, may change

sides now, and more properly belongs to me. It is long since I received your last, and yet I believe I can say truly that not a post has gone by me since the receipt of it that has not reminded me of the debt I owe you, for your obliging and unreserved communications both in prose and verse, especially for the latter, because I consider them as marks of your peculiar confidence. The truth is, I have been such a verse-maker myself, and so busy in preparing a volume for the press, which I imagine will make its appearance in the course of the winter, that I hardly had leisure to listen to the calls of any other engagement. It is however finished, and gone to the printer's, and I have nothing now to do with it, but to correct the sheets as they are sent to me, and consign it over to the judgment of the public. It is a bold undertaking at this time of day, when so many writers of the greatest abilities have gone before, who seem to have anticipated every valuable subject, as well as all the graces of poetical embellishment, to step forth into the world in the character of a bard, especially when it is considered, that luxury, idleness and vice, have debauched the public taste, and that nothing hardly is welcome but childish fiction, or what has at least a tendency to excite a laugh. I thought, however, that I had stumbled upon some subjects, that had never before been poetically treated, and upon some others, to which I imagined it would not be difficult to give an air of novelty by the manner of treating them. My sole drift is to be useful, a point which however I knew I should in vain aim at, unless I could be likewise entertaining. I have therefore fixed these two strings upon my bow, and by the help of both have done my best to send my arrow to the mark. My readers will hardly have begun to laugh, before they will be called upon to correct that levity, and peruse me with a more serious air. As to the effect, I leave it alone in His hands, who can alone produce it. neither prose nor verse can reform the manners of a dissolute age, much less can they inspire a sense of religious obligation, unless assisted and made efficacious by the power who superintends the truth he has vouchsafed to impart.

You made my heart ache with a sympathetic sorrow, when

you described the state of your mind on occasion of your late visit into Hertfordshire Had I been previously informed of your journey before you made it, I should have been able to have foretold all your feelings with the most unerring certainty of prediction You will never cease to feel upon that subject, but with your principles of resignation, and acquiescence in the divine will, you will always feel as becomes a Christian We are forbidden to murmur, but we are not forbidden to regret, and whom we loved tenderly while living we may still pursue with an affectionate remembrance, without having any occasion to charge ourselves with rebellion against the sovereignty that appointed a separation A day is coming when I am confident you will see and know, that mercy to both parties was the principal agent in a scene, the recollection of which is still painful

W C

CLXXVIII

**THE WORD THERE PROPERLY USED, IN ITS
COMMON THOUGH LESS EXACT MEANING**

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER

SIR,

Olney, Oct 20, 1781

I ACKNOWLEDGE with pleasure the accuracy of your remark on the two lines you have scored in the first page of the inclosed sheet, but though the word *there* in its critical and proper use is undoubtedly an adverb denoting locality, yet I cannot but think that in the familiar strain of poetical colloquy (especially if the gay careless air of the speaker in the present instance be considered) a less exact application of it may be allowed We say in common speech—you was scrupulous on that occasion, *there* I think you was wrong, —meaning in that part of your conduct I do not know indeed that I should hesitate to give it that sense, if I were writing prose for the press instead of verse, or on any other occasion whatsoever

The unexpected arrival of the inclosed so soon after the foregoing sheet has inspired me with hopes that your printer is about to proceed with the alacrity he promised so long

since It proves, however, that he is capable of great dispatch when he is pleased to use it

I am Sir,

Your most obedient Servant, WM. COWPER.

CLXXXIV

**MR. BATES'S OPINION OF THE PREFACE—COWPER
THINKS IT IN CHARACTER WITH THE WRITER,
AND LIKELY TO EXCITE CURIOSITY. — MR. SCOTT
AND MR. BABAN**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 22, 1781.

MR. BATES, without intending it, has passed a severer censure upon the modern world of readers, than any that can be found in my volume. If they are so merrily disposed, in the midst of a thousand calamities, that they will not deign to read a preface of three or four pages, because the purport of it is serious, they are far gone indeed, and in the last stage of a phrenzy, such as I suppose has prevailed in all nations that have been exemplarily punished, just before the infliction of the sentence. But though he lives in the world he has so ill an opinion of, and ought therefore to know it better than I, who have no intercourse with it at all, I am willing to hope that he may be mistaken. Curiosity is an universal passion. There are few people who think a book worth their reading, but feel a desire to know something about the writer of it. This desire will naturally lead them to peep into the preface, where they will soon find that a little perseverance will furnish them with some information on the subject. If, therefore, your preface finds no readers, I shall take it for granted that it is because the book itself is accounted not worth their notice. Be that as it may, it is quite sufficient that I have played the antic myself for their diversion, and that, in a state of dejection such as they are absolute strangers to, I have sometimes put on an air of cheerfulness and vivacity, to which I am myself in reality a stranger, for the sake of winning their attention.

to useful matter. I cannot endure the thought for a moment, that you should descend to my level on the occasion, and court their favour in a style not more unsuitable to your function, than to the constant and consistent strain of your whole character and conduct. No—let the preface stand I cannot mend it I could easily make a jest of it, but it is better as it is.

By the way—will it not be proper, as you have taken some notice of the modish dress I wear in *Table-Talk*, to include *Conversation* in the same description, which is (the first half of it, at least,) the most airy of the two? They will otherwise think, perhaps, that the observation might as well have been spared entirely, though I should have been sorry if it had, for when I am jocular I do violence to myself, and am therefore pleased with your telling them, in a civil way, that I play the fool to amuse them, not because I am one myself, but because I have a foolish world to deal with.

I am inclined to think that Mr Scott will no more be troubled by Mr. Raban, with applications of the sort I mentioned in my last. Mr. Scott, since I wrote that account, has related to us, himself, what passed in the course of their interview, and, it seems, the discourse ended with his positive assurance, that he never would consent to the measure, though at the same time, he declared he would never interrupt or attempt to suppress it. To which Mr. Raban replied, that unless he had his free consent, he should never engage in the office. It is to be hoped, therefore, that, in time, that part of the people, who may at present be displeased with Mr Scott for withholding his consent, will grow cool upon the subject, and be satisfied with receiving their instruction from their proper minister.

I beg you will, on no future occasion, leave a blank for Mrs Newton, unless you have first engaged her promise to fill it: for thus we lose the pleasure of your company, without being indemnified for the loss, by the acquisition of hers. Johnson sent me two sheets in the course of the last ten days, to my great astonishment. I complimented him upon his alacrity in hopes that encouragement

or hear of a crowd of voluptuaries, who have no ears but for music, no eyes but for splendour, and no tongue but for impertinence and folly,—I say, or at least I see occasion to say—This is madness!—This persisted in must have a tragical conclusion—It will condemn you, not only as Christians unworthy of the name but as intelligent creatures—You know by the light of nature, if you have not quenched it, that there is a God, and that a life like yours cannot be according to his will

I ask no pardon of you for the gravity and gloominess of these reflections, which I stumbled on when I least expected it; though, to say the truth, these or others of a like complexion are sure to occur to me, when I think of a scene of public diversion like that you have lately left.

I remember Mr——well; a man famous for nothing but idling away his time at the coffee-house, and bathing upon the open beach without the decent use of a machine. I may say upon the surest ground, that the world to which he conforms despises him for doing so, because I remember well that I and my party, who had not a grain of religion amongst us, always mentioned him with disdain; his charitable profanation of the sabbath will never earn him any other wages

I am inclined to hope that Johnson told you the truth, when he said he should publish me soon after Christmas. His press has been rather more punctual in its remittances than it used to be, we have now but little more than two of the longest pieces, and the small ones that are to follow, by way of epilogue, to print off, and then the affair is finished. But once more I am obliged to gape for franks; only these, which I hope will be the last I shall want, at yours and Mr. Smith's convenient leisure

We rejoice that you have so much reason to be satisfied with John's proficiency. The more spirit he has the better, if his spirit be but manageable, and put under such management as your prudence and Mrs. Unwin's will suggest. I need not guard you against severity, of which I conclude there is no need, and which I am sure you are not at all inclined to practise without it, but perhaps if I was to whisper, "beware of too much indulgence!"—I

should only give a hint that the fondness of a father for a fine boy might seem to justify. I have no particular reason for the caution, at this distance it is not possible that I should, but in a case like yours an admonition of that sort seldom wants propriety.

Your mother has been considerably indisposed with a sore throat and feverish complaint, but is well again, except that her strength, which is never that of an Amazon, is not quite restored. Her love attends you and your family, and mine goes with it.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

CLXXXVI.

**WONDER AT BECOMING AN AUTHOR—MR. BULL
AND MR. SCOTT—OLNEY NEWS.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 7, 1781.

SO FAR as Johnson is to be depended on, and I begin to hope that he is now in earnest, I think myself warranted to furnish you with an answer to the question which you say so often meets you. Mr Unwin made the same enquiry at his shop in his way to Stock from Brighthelmstone, when he assured him that the book would be printed off in a month, and ready for publication after the holidays. For some time past the business has proceeded glibly, and if he perseveres at the same rate, it is probable his answer will prove a true one.

(Having discontinued the practice of verse-making for some weeks, I now feel quite incapable of resuming it, and can only wonder at it, as one of the most extraordinary incidents in my life, that I should have composed a volume. Had it been suggested to me as a practicable thing, in better days, though I should have been glad to have found it so, many hindrances would have conspired to withhold me for such an enterprise. I should not have dared, at that time of day, to have committed my name to the public, and my reputation to the hazard of their opinion. But it is otherwise with me now. I am more indifferent

about what may touch me in that point, than ever I was in my life. The stake that would then have seemed important, now seems trivial, and it is of little consequence to me, who no longer feel myself possessed of what I accounted infinitely more valuable, whether the world's verdict shall pronounce me a poet, or an empty pretender to the title. This happy coldness towards a matter so generally interesting to all rhymers, left me quite at liberty for the undertaking, unfettered by fear, and under no restraints of that diffidence, which is my natural temper, and which would either have made it impossible for me to commence an author by name, or would have insured my miscarriage if I had. I my last dispatches to Johnson, I sent him a new edition of the title-page, having discarded the Latin paradox which stood at the head of the former, and added a French motto to that from Virgil. It is taken from a volume of the excellent Caraccioli, called *Jouissance de soi-même*, and strikes me as peculiarly apposite to my purpose.

Mr Bull is an honest man. We have seen him twice since he received your orders to march hither, and faithfully told us it was in consequence of those orders that he came. He dined with us yesterday, we were all in pretty good spirits, and the day passed very agreeably. It is not long since he called on Mr Scott. Mr Raban came in. Mr Bull began, addressing himself to the former, My friend, you are in trouble you are unhappy, I read it in your countenance. Mr. Scott replied, he had been so, but he was better. Come then, says Mr Bull, I will expound to you the cause of all your anxiety. You are too common, you make yourself cheap. Visit your people less, and converse more with your own heart. How often do you speak to them in the week?—"Thrice"—Ay, there it is! Your sermons are an old ballad, your prayers are an old ballad, and you are an old ballad too—"I would wish to tread in the steps of Mr Newton"—"You do well to follow his steps in all other instances, but in this instance you are wrong; and so was he. Mr Newton trod a path which no man but himself could have used so long as he did, and he wore it out long before he went from

Olney. Too much familiarity and condescension cost him the estimation of his people. He thought he should insure their love, to which he had the best possible title, and by those very means he lost it. Be wise, my friend, take warning; make yourself scarce, if you wish that persons of little understanding should know how to prize you.

When he related to us this harangue, so nicely adjusted to the case of the third person present, it did us both good, and as Jacques says,

"It made my lungs to crow like chanticleer " ' . .

Mrs Unwin wishes me to inform you, that the character of Thomas—is no longer a doubtful one at Olney. He is much addicted to public-houses, and everybody knows it. Geary Ball led him home drunk from one of them not long since, where he had been playing at quoits, and regaling himself with drink till he was unable to stand unsupported. She thought it the part of a friend to communicate to you this piece of intelligence, that you may not lend him money and lose it. He used frequently to borrow of us, but we intend henceforth to discontinue our aids of that sort.

I have only seen Mr. Jones since I received your last, and have had no opportunity to mention to him your enquiry. He was alive, yesterday, however, and not long since spoke of an intended journey to London.

We wish your letter to your parishioners may have the best effects, and shall be glad to read it. Many thanks for three couple of mackerel, perfectly fresh. Our love of you both, though often sent to London, is still with us. If it is not an inexhaustible well, (there is but one love that can, with propriety, be called so,) it is, however, a very deep one, and not likely to fail while we are living.

Yours, my dear sir,

W. C

CLXXXVII

**MARTIN MADAN—MR. HAWEIS'S INTENDED AT-
TACK ON HIS CHARACTER—OLNEY
ECCLIASTICAL NEWS.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov. 19, 1781

I REALLY think your apprehensions for Mr Madan are but too well founded I should be more concerned than surprised to find them verified. Sanguine and confident as he has been, his mortification will be extreme when he finds that what he took for *terra firma*, was a mere vapour hanging in the horizon, in pursuit of which he has run his vessel upon shoals that must prove fatal to her Discoverers of truth are generally sober, modest, and humble, and if their discoveries are less valued by mankind than they deserve to be, can bear the disappointment with patience and equality of temper But hasty reasoners and confident asserters are generally wedded to an hypothesis, and transported with joy at their fancied acquisitions, are impatient under contradiction, and grow wild at the thoughts of a refutation Never was an air-built castle more completely demolished than his is likely to be, I wish with you that he may be able to sustain the shock, but am at a loss to conceive how he should do it After awakening the attention of mankind, and calling the world around him to listen to his '*Euphrosyne*', after having distressed the serious, and excited the curiosity, (perhaps the appetite,) of the giddy and unthinking, to find himself baffled with so much ease, and refuted with such convincing perspicuity on the part of his opponent, must give a terrible blow to every passion that engaged him in the task, and that was soothed and gratified to the utmost by his fancied success in it. This may, (and every considerate person will wish it may,) dispose him to a serious recollection and examination of his past conduct, and work in him a reform more valuable to him than the possession of all Solomon's wives would be, or even the establishment of polygamy by law. Surely the poor lunatic who uses his blanket for a robe, and imagines that a few straws struck whimsically through his hair are a

royal diadem, is not more to be pitted, perhaps less, than the profound reasoner who turns over shelves of folios with infinite industry and toil, and at the end of all his labour finds that he has grasped a shadow, and made himself a jest to the bystander

I shall be obliged to you if, when you have had an opportunity to learn, you will let me know how he bears the brunt, whether he hardens himself against conviction, which in this case is scarcely possible, whether he repents of what is past, or whether he is quite overwhelmed by regret and fruitless sorrow,

You do me an honour I little deserve when you ask my opinion upon any occasion, and speak of being determined by it. Such as it is, however, it is always at your service, and would be if it were better worth your having.—The dictates of compassion and humanity prompt you to interpose your good offices in order to prevent the publication with which this unhappy man is threatened by Mr. Haweis. They are advisers you may safely listen to, and deserve the more attention on the present occasion, as you are perhaps the only man in the world to whom such a design has been suggested, and who would know how to manage the execution of it with sufficient delicacy and discretion. The book and the author are distinct subjects, and will be for ever accounted such by all reasonable persons. The author, indeed, may suffer by the follies of the book, but the latter ought not to be judged by the character of the writer. If it were otherwise, yet in this case there can be no need of Mr. Haweis, the point in dispute being already tried, and Mr. Madan's arguments condemned at the bar of the public. Mr. Haweis will hurt himself more by one such ungenerous proceeding, than he can possibly hurt Mr. Madan by divulging, if he can do it, a thousand irregularities in his conduct. Sensual and lawless gratifications are odious enough, especially in a minister; but double detestation attends the man who, to gratify a present enmity, avails himself of secrets he could never have had possession of, had he not once professed himself a friend. If it should happen too that Mr. Madan's intellects should be swept away by such a deluge of obloquy and de-

traction, following close upon his present disappointment, (an event not at all improbable,) Mr Haweis will have reason to wish that he had taken his life rather than destroyed his character. He thinks perhaps the interest of the cause demands it of him, but when was the cause promoted by a discovery of the vices or follies of its advocates and professors? On the whole, therefore, if I must advise, I would advise to write

I believe I returned Mrs Newton thanks for the cocoanuts as soon as we received them, but have now a fresh occasion to thank her, Mrs Unwin having received much benefit from them, and found her health improved ever since she began to eat them

Our controversies here are at a stand for the present Mr Raban has not yet received the citation with which Mr Page threatened him, and the Warringtonians are contented not to push forward in the business of the pcw till they have seen Mr Wright, who is expected here on Tuesday. —Mr Page is very thinly attended, Weston and Clifton and the meetings drink up all his congregation. There were but fifteen to wait upon his last Thursday's lecture; —the blessed effect of quarrelling about straws, when he might have had peace with every body if he had not gone out of his way to seek contention. His hearers, however, complain of great inconsistency in his preaching, and some of his warmest partisans, and whose attachment to him has lasted the longest, begin to be disgusted

Many thanks for two pair of remarkably fine soles, with shrimps, they were here in sixteen hours after they set out from London, and came very opportunely for me, who, having a violent cold, could hardly have eaten any thing else

Mrs Unwin intended to have sent a couple of fowls, but being taken out of the coop, one of them appeared to be distempered, and two others, on examination, in the same predicament, one so bad that we were obliged to throw it away, and the other we gave away, not thinking it eatable except by those whose stomachs were less nice than our own. It is, I suppose, an epipoultrical malady

You told me Mrs Newton intended to have sent me a long

story about the fish With both my two eyes, assisted by my two glasses, I could make neither more nor less of it than a long song, and so I read the passage to Mrs Unwin once and again I should have felt more than ordinary concern for the business that prevented her, and have endeavoured by all means to persuade her to resume her intention and to send me this song immediately, if Mrs Unwin had not some time after discovered, with more sagacity than I happened to have in exercise, that, what I took for a song was only a story, the insignificant letter *t* being omitted, and the *ry* having assumed the appearance on this occasion of their near relations *ng*

Mrs Unwin would have attempted to write, but I dissuaded her from it, because even when she is pretty well she finds it hurtful

You will believe us both, as ever,
Your obliged and affectionate friends and servants,
WM AND M—

CLXXXVIII

PAUL WHITEHEAD'S GHOST, COWPER'S DISLIKE OF IMITATION.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 24, 1791

News is always acceptable, especially from another world I cannot tell you what has been done in the Chesapeake, but I can tell you what has passed at West Wycombe, in this county Do you feel yourself disposed to give credit to the story of an apparition? No, say you I am of your mind I do not believe more than one in a hundred of those tales with which old women frighten children, and teach children to frighten each other. But you are not such a philosopher, I suppose, as to have persuaded yourself that an apparition is an impossible thing. You can attend to a story of that sort, if well authenticated? Yes Then I can tell you one

You have heard, no doubt, of the romantic friendship that subsisted once between Paul Whitehead and Lord L.

Dispenser, the late Sir Francis Dashwood.—When Paul died, he left his lordship a legacy. It was his heart, which was taken out of his body, and sent as directed. His friend having built a church, and at that time just finished it, used it as a mausoleum upon this occasion, and having (as I think the newspapers told us at the time) erected an elegant pillar in the centre of it, on the summit of this pillar, enclosed in a golden urn, he placed the heart in question. But not as a lady places a china figure upon her mantel-tree, or on the top of her cabinet, but with much respectful ceremony, and all the forms of funeral solemnity. He hired the best singers and best performers. He composed an anthem for the purpose, he invited all the nobility and gentry in the country to assist at the celebration of these obsequies, and having formed them all into an august procession, marched to the place appointed at their head, and consigned the posthumous treasure, with his own hands, to its state of honourable elevation. Having thus, as he thought, (and as he might well think, for it seems they were both renowned for their infidelity, and if they had any religion at all were pagans,) appeased the manes of the deceased, he rested satisfied with what he had done, and supposed his friend would rest. But not so,—about a week since, I received a letter from a person, who cannot have been misinformed, telling me that Paul has appeared frequently of late to his Lordship, who labours under a complication of distempers,—that it is supposed the shock he has suffered from such unexpected visits will make his recovery, which was before improbable, impossible. Nor is this all—to ascertain the fact, and to put it out of the power of scepticism to argue away the reality of it, there are few, if any, of his lordship's numerous household, who have not likewise seen him, sometimes in the park, sometimes in the garden, as well as in the house, by day and night, indifferently I make no reflections upon this incident, having other things to write about, and but little room.

. I am much indebted to Mr Smith for more franks, and still more obliged by the handsome note with which he accompanied them. He has furnished me sufficiently for the pres-

ent occasion, and by his readiness, and obliging manner of doing it, encouraged me to have recourses to him, in case another exigence of the same kind should offer. A French author I was reading last night says, He that has written, will write again. If the critics do not set their foot upon this first egg that I have laid, and crush it, I shall probably verify his observation, and when I feel my spirits rise, and that I am armed with industry sufficient for the purpose, undertake the production of another volume. At present, however, I do not feel myself so disposed; and, indeed, he that would write, should read, not that he may retail the observations of other men, but that, being thus refreshed and replenished, he may find himself in a condition to make and to produce his own. I reckon it among my principal advantages, as a composer of verses, that I have not read an English poet these thirteen years, and but one these twenty years. Imitation, even of the best models, is my aversion, it is servile and mechanical, a trick that has enabled many to usurp the name of author, who could not have written at all, if they had not written upon the pattern of somebody indeed original. But when the ear and the taste have been much accustomed to the manner of others, it is almost impossible to avoid it, and we imitate in spite of ourselves, just in proportion as we admire. But enough of this.

Your mother, who is as well as the season of the year will permit, desires me to add her love. The salmon you sent us arrived safe, and was remarkably fresh. What a comfort it is to have a friend who knows that we love salmon, and who cannot pass by a fishmonger's shop, without finding his desire to send us some, a temptation too strong to be resisted!

Yours my dear friend

W C

CLXXXIX

**PLEASURE OF WRITING LETTERS—SOCIAL
FEELING—A POCO-CUBANTE—FISH.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 26, 1781.

I wrote to you by the last post, supposing you at Stock, but lest that letter should not follow you to Laytonstone,

and you should suspect me of unreasonable delay, and lest the frank you have sent me should degenerate into waste paper, and perish upon my hands, I write again. The former letter, however, containing all my present stock of intelligence, it is more than possible that this may prove a blank, or but little worthy of your acceptance. You will do me the justice to suppose, that if I could be very entertaining, I would be so, because, by giving me credit for such a willingness to please, you only allow me a share of that universal vanity, which inclines every man, upon all occasions, to exhibit himself to the best advantage. To say the truth, however, when I write, as I do to you, not about business, nor on any subject that approaches to that description, I mean much less my correspondent's amusement, which my modesty will not always permit me to hope for, than my own. There is a pleasure annexed to the communication of one's ideas, whether by word of mouth, or by letter, which nothing earthly can supply the place of and it is the delight we find in this mutual intercourse, that not only proves us to be creatures intended for social life, but more than any thing else perhaps fits us for it—I have no patience with philosophers,—they, one and all, suppose (at least I understand it to be a prevailing opinion among them) that man's weakness, his necessities, his inability to stand alone, have furnished the prevailing motive, under the influence of which he renounced at first a life of solitude, and became a gregarious creature. It seems to me more reasonable, as well as more honourable to my species, to suppose that generosity of soul, and a brotherly attachment to our own kind, drew us, as it were, to one common centre, taught us to build cities, and inhabit them, and welcome every stranger, that would cast in his lot amongst us, that we might enjoy fellowship with each other, and the luxury of reciprocal endearments, without which a paradise could afford no comfort. There are indeed all sorts of characters in the world; there are some whose understandings are so sluggish, and whose hearts are such mere clods, that they live in society without either contributing to the sweets of it, or having any relish for them. A man of this stamp passes by our window continu-

ally ; he draws patterns for the lace maker's ; I never saw him conversing with a neighbour but once in my life, though I have known him by sight these twelve years ; he is of a very sturdy make, has a round belly, extremely protuberant, which he evidently considers as his best friend, because it is his only companion, and it is the labour of his life to fill it. I can easily conceive, that it is merely the love of good eating and drinking, and now and then the want of a new pair of shoes, that attaches this man so much to the neighbourhood of his fellow mortals, for suppose these exigencies, and others of a like kind, to subsist no longer, and what is there that could possibly give society the preference in his esteem ? He might strut about with his two thumbs upon his hips in a wilderness, he could hardly be more silent than he is at Olney, and for any advantage, or comfort, or friendship, or brotherly affection, he could not be more destitute of such blessings there than in his present situation. But other men have something more than guts to satisfy, there are the yearnings of the heart, which let philosophers say what they will, are more importunate than all the necessities of the body, that will not suffer a creature, worthy to be called human, to be content with an insulated life, or to look for his friends among the beasts of the forest. Yourself for instance ! It is not because there are no tailors or pastry-cooks to be found upon Salisbury Plain, that you do not choose it for your abode, but because you are a philanthropist,—because you are susceptible of social impressions, and have a pleasure in doing a kindness when you can—Witness the salmon you still mean to send, to which your mother wishes you to add a handful of prawns, not only because she likes them, but because they agree with her so well that she even finds them medicinal.

Now upon the word of a poor creature, I have said all that I have said, without the least intention to say one word of it when I began. But thus it is with my thoughts—when you shake a crab-tree, the fruit falls, good for nothing indeed when you have got it, but still the best that is to be expected from a crab-tree. You are welcome to them, such as they are, and if you approve my senti-

ments, tell the philosophers of the day, that I have outshot them all, and have discovered the true origin of society, when I least looked for it

We should be glad to receive this fresh proof of your regard, viz the additional piece of salmon, at any time before Christmas,
W. C.

CXC.

PROVIDENCE—MOSES BROWNE—AMERICAN WAR.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

THE salmon and lobsters arrived safe, and were remarkably fine, we knew the reason why you sent no prawns, before you mentioned it. Accept our thanks for the welcome present

I dare say I do not enter exactly into your idea of a present theocracy, because mine amounts to no more than the common one, that all mankind, though few are really aware of it, act under a providential direction, and that a gracious superintendence in particular is the lot of those who trust in God. Thus I think respecting individuals; and with respect to the kingdoms of the earth, that perhaps by his own immediate operation, though more probably by the intervention of angles, (*vide* Daniel,) the great Governor manages and rules them, assigns them their origin, duration, and end, appoints them prosperity or adversity, glory or disgrace, as their virtues or their vices, their regard to the dictates of conscience and his word, or their prevailing neglect of both, may indicate and require. But in this persuasion, as I said, I do not at all deviate from the general opinion of those who believe a Providence, at least who have a scriptural belief of it. I suppose, therefore, you mean something more, and shall be glad to be more particularly informed.

I am glad—(we are both so) that you are not afraid of seeing your own image multiplied too fast. It is not necessarily a disadvantage. It is sometimes easier to manage and provide for half a dozen children, than to regulate the passions and satisfy the extravagant demands of one. I

remember hearing Moses Browne say, that when he had only two or three children, he thought he should have been distracted ; but when he had ten or a dozen, he was perfectly easy, and thought no more about the matter.

I see but one feature in the face of our national concerns that pleases me,—the war with America, it seems, is to be conducted on a different plan. This is something ; when a long series of measures, of a certain description, has proved unsuccessful, the adoption of others is at least pleasing, as it encourages a hope that they may possibly prove wiser, and more effectual, but, indeed, without discipline, all is lost Pitt himself could have done nothing with such tools ; but he would not have been so betrayed, he would have made the traitors answer with their heads, for their cowardice or supineness, and their punishment would have made survivors active.

W. C.

CXCI.

AMERICAN WAR—A PASSAGE IN ONE OF HIS POEMS SUPPRESSED—MR. NEWTON'S ADDRESS TO HIS PARISHIONERS—MARTIN MADAM.

TO THE JOHN NEWTON,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 27, 1781

FIRST Mr Wilson, then Mr Teedon, and lastly Mr Whitford, each with a cloud of melancholy on his brow, and with a mouth wide open, have just announced to us this unwelcome intelligence from America. We are sorry to hear it, and should be more cast down than we are, if we did not know that this catastrophe was ordained beforehand, and that therefore neither conduct, nor courage, nor any means that can possibly be mentioned, could have prevented it. If the King and his ministry can be contented to close the business here, and, taking poor Dean Tucker's advice, resign the Americans into the hands of their new masters, it may be well for Old England. But if they will still persevere, they will find it, I doubt, a hopeless contest to the last. Domestic murmurs will grow louder, and the hands of faction, being strengthened by

this late miscarriage, will find it easy to set fire to the pile of combustibles they have been so long employed in building. These are my politics ; and for aught I can see, you and we by our respective firesides, though neither connected with men in power, nor professing to possess any share of that sagacity which thinks itself qualified to wield the affairs of kingdoms, can make as probable conjectures, and look forward into futurity with as clear a sight, as the greatest man in the cabinet

Though when I wrote the passage in question, I was not at all aware of any impropriety in it, and though I have frequently since that time both read and recollected it with the same approbation, I lately became uneasy upon the subject, and had no rest in my mind for three days, till I resolved to submit it to a trial at your tribunal, and to dispose of it ultimately according to your sentence. I am glad you have condemned it, and though I do not feel as if I could presently supply its place, shall be willing to attempt the task, whatever labour it may cost me, and rejoice that it will not be in the power of the critics, whatever else they may charge me with, to accuse me of bigotry, or a design to make a certain denomination of Christians odious, at the hazard of the public peace. I had rather my book were burnt, than a single line guilty of such a tendency should escape me

We thank you for two copies of your Address to your Parishioners. The first I lent to Mr Scott, whom I have not seen since I put it into his hands. You have managed your subject well, have applied yourself to despisers and absentees of every description, in terms so expressive of the interest you take in their welfare, that the most wrong-headed person cannot be offended. We both wish it may have the effect you intend, and that prejudices and groundless apprehensions being removed, the immediate objects of your ministry may make a more considerable part of your congregation

I return Mr. Madan's letter, with thanks for a sight of it. Having forfeited all the rest of his most valuable attachments without regret, and sacrificed I suppose many of his dearest connexions to his beloved hypothesis, he still re-

collects that he had once a warm place in your affections, and seems still unwilling to resign it. It is easy to see that I and my book were mentioned, merely because we afforded him an opportunity to renew a correspondence, which, blind as he is, and intoxicated with error, he still catches at with eagerness, and cannot prevail with himself to renounce. But yet how obstinate, and, in appearance, how perfectly a stranger to the convincing arguments by which his whole edifice of sophistry and misinterpretation has been so completely demolished! Has he never seen his opponent in the Review? If he has, he ought at least to attempt to answer him. To treat so able and so learned a writer with neglect, is but a paltry subterfuge, and no reasonable man will ever give him credit for the sincerity of the contempt he may affect for a critic so deserving of his attention. If he has not, his behaviour is disingenuous to the last degree, and will, I suppose, as little serve his purpose. A champion has no right to despise his enemy till he has faced and vanquished him. But henceforth I suppose this noisy subject will be silent, may it rest in peace, and may none be hardy enough hereafter to disturb its ashes.

Many thanks for a barrel of oysters, which we are still eating. Nanny Puttenham desires me to send her duty she is brought to bed, and enjoys a more comfortable frame of mind. The letter from Mr. Old ought to have waited on you with my last, but was forgot. Our best love attends yourself and Mrs. Newton.

Yours, my dear Sir, as ever,

W C

CXCII

**A FRAGMENT—A PARAGRAPH IN LATIN—LINES
INSERTED IN THE POEM AT MRS. UNWIN'S
SUGGESTION—ORIGIN OF HIS EPIGRAM OF
MARY AND JOHN—A VISITOR.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

[FRAGMENT]

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The same date.

A VISIT for Mr. Whitford shortened one of your letters to me, and now the same cause has operated with the same

effect upon one of mine to you He is just gone ; desired me to send his love, and talks of enclosing a letter to you in my next cover

Litteras tuas irato Sacerdoti scriptas, legi, perlegi, et ne verbum quidem mutandum censeo Gratus tibi acturum si sapiat, existimo, sin aliter eveniat, amici tamen officium præstitisti, et te coram te vindicasti

I have not written in Latin to show my scholarship, nor to excite Mrs Newton's curiosity, nor for any other wise reason whatever, but merely because, just at that moment, it came into my head to do so

Mrs Unwin having suggested the hint, I have added just as many lines to my poem lately mentioned as make up the whole number two hundred I had no intention to write a round sum, but it has happened so She thought there was a fair opportunity to give the Bishops a slap, and as it would not have been civil to have denied a lady so reasonable a request, I have just made the powder fly out of their wigs a little

I never wrote a copy of Mary and John in my life, except that which I sent to you It was one of those hagatelles which sometimes spring up like mushrooms in my imagination, either while I am writing or just before I begin I sent it to you, because to you I send any thing that I think may raise a smile, but should never have thought of multiplying the impression Neither did I ever repeat them to any one except Mrs Unwin The inference is fair and easy that you have some friend who has a good memory

This afternoon the maid opened the parlour-door, and told us there was a lady in the kitchen. We desired she might be introduced, and prepared for the reception of Mrs Jones But it proved to be a lady unknown to us, and not Mrs Jones. She walked directly up to Mrs Unwin, and never drew back till their noses were almost in contact It seemed as if she meant to salute her An uncommon degree of familiarity, accompanied with an air of most extraordinary gravity, made me think her a little crazy. I was alarmed, and so was Mrs. Unwin She had a bundle in her hand—a silk handkerchief tied up at the four corners When I found she was not mad, I took her for a smuggler,

and made no doubt but she had brought samples of contraband goods. But our surprise, considering the lady's appearance and deportment, was tenfold what it had been, when we found that it was Mary Philips's daughter, who had brought us a few apples by way of a specimen of a quantity she had for sale. She drank tea with us, and behaved herself during the rest of her stay with much—*cetera desunt*

CXCIII

A PARAGRAPH FROM EXPOSTULATION

WITHDRAWN.

TO MR JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR,

Olney, Nov 27, 1781

You will oblige me by telling me in your next, whether, if I should find it proper to displace a paragraph in *Expostulation*, and substitute another in its stead, there is yet time for the purpose. I have doubts about the expedience of mentioning the subject on which that paragraph is written

Many thanks for your judicious remarks

I am, &c.

WM COWPER.

CXCIV

**DESIRING HIS FRIEND TO SUBSCRIBE FOR HIM
TO SOME CIRCULATING LIBRARY**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 30, 1781

THOUGH I have a deal of wit, and Mrs Unwin has much more, it would require more than our joint stock amounts to, to answer all the demands of these gloomy days and long evenings. Books are the only remedy I can think of, but books are a commodity we deal but little in at Olney. If therefore it may consist with your other various multifarious concerns, I shall be obliged to you if you will be so good as to subscribe for me to some well-furnished circulating library, and leave my address upon the counter,

written in a legible hand, and order them to send me down a catalogue. Their address you will be so good as to transmit to me, and then you shall have no further trouble

This being merely a letter of business I add no more, but that.

I am yours,

WM. COWPER

CXCV

SALE OF HIS CHAMBERS—TWO POEMS PREDICTING SUCCESS IN THE AMERICAN WAR, SUPPRESSED.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 2, 1781

I THANK you for the note. There is some advantage in having a tenant who is irregular in his payments the longer the rent is withheld, the more considerable the sum when it arrives, to which we may add, that its arrival being unexpected, a circumstance that obtains always in a degree exactly in proportion to the badness of the tenant, is always sure to be the occasion of an agreeable surprise, a sensation that deserves to be ranked among the pleasantest that belong to us

I gave two hundred and fifty pounds for the chambers. Mr Ashurst's receipt, and the receipt of the person of whom he purchased, are both among my papers and when wanted, as I suppose they will be in case of a sale, shall be forthcoming at your order

The conquest of America seems to go on but slowly. Our ill success in that quarter will oblige me to suppress two pieces that I was rather proud of They were written two or three years ago, not long after the double repulse sustained by Mr D'Estang at Lucia and at Savannah, and when our operations in the western world wore a more promising aspect. Presuming, upon such promises, that I might venture to prophesy an illustrious consummation of the war, I did so But my predictions proving false, the verse in which they were expressed must perish with them

Since I began to write, I have searched all the papers I have, and cannot find the receipts above-mentioned. I

hope, however, they are not essential to the validity of the transaction

Yours, my dear Sir, Wm. COWPER.

CXCVI.

**POLITICS RENOUNCED THENCEFORTH—COWPER
BRED UP TO DELIGHT IN POLITICAL SONGS
MR. BARHAM.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec. 4, 1781

THE present to the Queen of France, and the piece addressed to Sir Joshua Reynolds, my only two political efforts, being of the predictive kind, and both falsified, or likely to be so, by the miscarriage of the royal cause in America, were already condemned when I received your last I have a poetical epistle which I wrote last summer, and another poem not yet finished, in stanzas, with which I mean to supply their places Henceforth I have done with politics This stage of national affairs is such a fluctuating scene, that an event which appears probable to-day becomes impossible to-morrow, and unless a man were indeed a prophet, he cannot, but with the greatest hazard of losing his labour, bestow his rhymes upon future contingencies, which perhaps are never to take place but in his own wishes and in the reveries of his own fancy I learned when I was a boy, being the son of a staunch Whig, and a man that loved his country, to glow with that patriotic enthusiasm which is apt to break forth into poetry, or at least to prompt a person, if he has any inclination that way, to poetical endeavours Prior's pieces of that sort were recommended to my particular notice; and as that part of the present century was a season when clubs of a political character, and consequently political songs, were much in fashion, the best in that style, some written by Rowe, and I think some by Congreve, and many by other wits of the day, were proposed to my admiration. Being grown up, I became desirous of imitating such bright examples, and while I lived in the Temple produced several half penny ballads, two or three of which had the honour to be popu

lar. What we learn in childhood we retain long ; and the successes we met with, about three years ago, when D'Estaing was twice repulsed, once in America, and once in the West Indies, having set fire to my patriotic zeal once more, it discovered itself by the same symptoms, and produced effects much like those it had produced before. But, unhappily, the ardour I felt upon the occasion, disdaining to be confined within the bounds of fact pushed me upon uniting the prophetic with the poetical character, and defeated its own purpose I am glad it did. The less there is of that sort in my book the better, it will be more consonant to your character, who patronise the volume, and, indeed, to the constant tenor of my own thoughts upon public matters, that I should exhort my countrymen to repentance, than that I should flatter their pride—that vice for which, perhaps, they are even now so severely punished.

I subjoin the lines with which I mean to supersede the obnoxious ones in Expostulation If it should lie fairly in your way to do it, I will beg of you to deliver them to Johnson, and at the same time to strike your pen through the offensive passage I ask it merely because it will save a frank, but not unless you can do it without inconvenience to yourself The new paragraph consists exactly of the same number of lines with the old one, for upon this occasion I worked like a tailor when he sews a patch upon a hole in your coat, supposing it might be necessary to do so Upon second thoughts I will enclose the lines instead of adding them *ad calcem*, that I may save you the trouble of a transcript

We are glad, for Mr Barham's sake, that he has been so happily disappointed How little does the world suspect what passes in it every day !—that true religion is working the same wonders now as in the first ages of the church,—that parents surrender up their children into the hands of God, to die at his own appointed moment, and by what death he pleases, without a murmur, and receive them again as if by a resurrection from the dead ! The world, however, would be more justly chargeable with wilful blindness than it is, if all professors of the truth exemplified its power in their conduct as conspicuously as Mr. Barham.

Easterly winds, and a state of confinement within our own walls, suit neither me nor Mrs Unwin, though we are both, to use the Irish term rather unwell than ill. The cocoa nut, though it had not a drop of liquor in it, and though the kernel came out whole, entirely detached from the shell, was an exceeding good one. Our hearts are with you

Yours, my dear friend, W C

Mrs Madan is happy. She will be found ripe, fall when she may

We are sorry you speak doubtfully about a spring visit to Olney. Those doubts must not outlive the winter

CXCVII

CONVERSING WITH HIS FRIEND UPON THE AMERICAN WAR, AND PREDICTING FROM THE LOSS OF AMERICA, THE RUIN OF ENGLAND.

TO JOSEPH HILL ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec. 9, 1781

HAVING returned you many thanks for the fine cod and oysters you favoured me with, though it is now morning I will suppose it afternoon, that you and I dined together, are comfortably situated by a good fire, and just entering on a sociable conversation. You speak first, because I am a man of few words

Well, Cowper, what do you think of this American war?

I. To say the truth I am not very fond of thinking about it, when I do I think of it, unpleasantly enough. I think it bids fair to be the ruin of the country

You. That's very unpleasant indeed! If that should be the consequence, it will be the fault of those who might put a stop to it if they would

I. But do you really think that practicable?

You. Why not? If people leave off fighting, peace follows of course. I wish they would withdraw the forces and put an end to the squabble

Now I am going to make a long speech

I. You know the complexion of my sentiments upon some subjects well enough, and that I do not look upon

public events either as fortuitous, or absolutely derivable either from the wisdom or folly of man. These indeed operate as second causes, but we must look for the cause of the decline or the prosperity of an empire elsewhere. I have long since done complaining of men and measures, having learned to consider them merely as the instruments of a higher Power, by which he either bestows wealth, peace, and dignity upon a nation when he favours it, or by which he strips it of all those honours, when public enormities long persisted in provoke him to inflict a public punishment. The counsels of great men become as foolish and preposterous when he is pleased to make them so, as those of the frantic creatures in Bedlam, when they lay their distracted heads together to consider of the state of the nation. But I go still farther. The wisdom, or the want of wisdom, that we observe or think we observe in those that rule us, entirely out of the question, I cannot look upon the circumstances of this country, without being persuaded that I discern in them an entanglement and perplexity that I have never met with in the history of any other, which I think preternatural (if I may use the word on such a subject), prodigious in its kind, and such as human sagacity can never remedy. I have a good opinion of the understanding and integrity of some in power, yet I see plainly that they are unequal to the task. I think as favourably of some that are not in power, yet I am sure they have never yet in any of their speeches recommended the plan that would effect the salutary purpose. If we pursue the war, it is because we are desperate; it is plunging and sinking year after year into still greater depths of calamity. If we relinquish it, the remedy is equally desperate, and would prove I believe in the end no remedy at all. Either way we are undone. Perseverance will only enfeeble us more; we cannot recover the colonies by arms. If we discontinue the attempt, in that case we fling away voluntarily what in the other we strive ineffectually to regain, and whether we adopt the one measure or the other, are equally undone. for I consider the loss of America as the ruin of England. Were we less encumbered than we are at home, we could but ill

afford it ; but being crushed as we are under an enormous debt that the public credit can at no rate carry much longer, the consequence is sure Thus it appears to me that we are squeezed to death, between the two sides of that sort of alternative which is commonly called a cleft stick, the most threatening and portentous condition in which the interests of any country can possibly be found

I think I have done pretty well for a man of few words, and have contrived to have all the talk to myself. I thank you for not interrupting me

Yours, my dear friend,

WM. COWPER.

CXCVIII

**ARRANGEMENT OF HIS POEMS—NOT NECESSARY
THAT A POET SHOULD KEEP CLOSE TO PHI-
LOSOPHICAL FACTS OR THEORIES—MELAN-
CHOLY ANTICIPATIONS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT
UPON ENGLAND.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec. 17, 1781.

THE poem I had in hand when I wrote last is on the subject of Friendship By the following post I received a packet from Johnson The proof-sheet it contained brought our business down to the latter part of *Retirement*, the next will consequently introduce the first of the smaller pieces. The volume consisting, at least four-fifths of it, of heroic verse as it is called and the graver matter, I was desirous to displace the Burning Mountain from the post it held in the van of the light infantry, and throw it into the rear Having finished *Friendship*, and fearing that if I delayed to send it, the press would get the start of my intention, and knowing perfectly that with respect to the subject, and the subject matter of it, it contained nothing that you would think exceptionable, I took the liberty to transmit it to Johnson, and hope that the next post will return it to me printed It consists of between thirty and forty stanzas a length that qualifies it to supply the place of the two cancelled pieces, without the aid of the Epistle I mentioned According to the present arrangement, therefore, *Friendship*, which, is rather of a lively cast, though quite

sober, will follow next *Retirement* and *Ætna* will close the volume. Modern naturalists, I think, tell us that the volcano forms the mountain. I shall be charged therefore, perhaps, with an unphilosophical error in supposing that *Ætna* was once unconscious of intestine fires, and as lofty as at present before the commencement of the eruptions. It is possible, however, that the rule, though just in some instances, may not be of universal application, and if it be, I do not know that a poet is obliged to write with a philosopher at his elbow, prepared always to bind down his imagination to mere matters of fact. You will oblige me by your opinion, and tell me, if you please, whether you think an apologetical note may be necessary, for I would not appear a dunce in matters that every Review-reader must needs be apprized of. I say a note, because an alteration of the piece is impracticable, at least without cutting off its head, and setting on a new one, a task I should not readily undertake, because the lines which must, in that case, be thrown out, are some of the most poetical in the performance.

Possessing greater advantages, and being equally dissolute with the most abandoned of the neighbouring nations, we are certainly more criminal than they. They *cannot* see, and we *will* not. It is to be expected, therefore, that when judgment is walking through the earth, it will come commissioned with the heaviest tidings to the people chargeable with the most perverseness. In the latter part of the Duke of Newcastle's administration, all faces gathered blackness. The people, as they walked the streets, had, every one of them, a countenance like what we may suppose to have been the prophet Jonah's, when he cried "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be destroyed." But our Nineveh too repented, that is to say, she was affected in a manner somewhat suitable to her condition. She was dejected, she learned an humbler language, and seemed, if she did not trust in God, at least to have renounced her confidence in herself. A respite ensued, the expected ruin was averted, and her prosperity became greater than ever. Again she became self-conceited and proud, as at the first, and how stands it with our Nineveh now? Even

as you say, her distress infinite, her destruction appears inevitable, and her heart as hard as the nether millstone. Thus, I suppose, it was when ancient Nineveh found herself agreeably disappointed, she turned the grace of God into lasciviousness, and that flagrant abuse of mercy exposed her, at the expiration of forty years, to the complete execution of a sentence she had only been threatened with before. A similarity of events, accompanied by a strong similarity of conduct, seems to justify our expectations that the catastrophe will not be very different. But after all, the designs of Providence are inscrutable, and as in the case of individuals, so in that of nations, the same causes do not always produce the same effects. The country indeed cannot be saved in its present state of profligacy and profaneness, but may, nevertheless, be led to repentance by means we are little aware of, and at a time when we least expect it.

In the mislaid letters I took notice of certain disagreeable doubts you had expressed in one enclosed to us and unsealed, concerning your visit next spring to Olney. You will be so good as to send those doubts packing, and convince them that they are unreasonable intruders, by coming down as soon as your famous festival is over. We have to thank you for a barrel of oysters, exceeding good.

Our best love attends yourself and Mrs. Newton, and we rejoice that you feel no burdens but those you bear in common with the liveliest and favoured Christians.—It is a happiness in poor Peggy's case that she can swallow five shillings' worth of physic in a day, but a person must be in her case to be duly sensible of it.

Yours, my dear Sir, W C

Mrs. Unwin begs Mrs. Newton's acceptance of a couple of chickens. She would have sent a goose, but none have come our way.

James Robinson was buried on Sunday. The opinion of the well-informed is that his drams coat him a guinea a week to the last.

CXCIX.

RELATING TO THE VOLUME IN THE PRESS.

TO MR JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER.

SIR,

1781

I ALWAYS ascribe your silence to the cause you assign for it yourself I inclose *Friendship*, in hopes that it may arrive in time to stand the foremost of the smaller pieces, instead of *Etna*, which, perhaps, had better be placed at the end Such a length of the *penseroso* will make the *allegro* doubly welcome, but if the press has gone forward and begun *Etna*, it is of no great importance other wise I should prefer this arrangement, as we shall then begin and end with a compliment to the King—who (poor man) may at this time be glad of such a tribute

Instead of the fifth line in the supplemental passage you have received, in which the word *disgrace* is inadvertently repeated, being mentioned in the first, I would wish you to insert the following—

“When sin has shed dishonour on thy brow ”

But if the passage is already printed I can make the alteration myself when the sheet comes down for the last revisal

P 288———“because they must ”

I suppose you scored these words as of an import too similar to the word *convenience*, I have therefore relieved the objection by the word *self-impoverished*, otherwise it does not appear to me that the expression is objectionable it is plain, indeed, but not bald

I am Sir,

Your most obedient servant

WM COWPER

CC.

**THE SHORT DAY—ADMIRAL KEMPENFELT AND
THE FRENCH FLEET—ENGLAND NOT YET
BROUGHT TO RELIGIOUS HUMILIATION—MR.
FLETCHER AT DEWSBURY—MR. POWLEY
PREACHES AGAINST HIM—MR. WESLEY—LINES
ON A FLATTING MILL ENCLOSED,**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The shortest day, 1781

I MIGHT easily make this letter a continuation of my last, another national miscarriage having furnished me with a fresh illustration of the remarks we have both been making. Mr Smith, who has most obligingly supplied me with franks throughout my whole concern with Johnson, accompanied the last parcel he sent me with a note dated from the House of Commons, in which he seemed happy to give me the earliest intelligence of the capture of the French transports by Admiral Kempenfelt, and of a close engagement between the two fleets, so much to be expected. This note was written on Monday, and reached me by Wednesday's post, but alas ! the same post brought us the newspaper that informed us of his being forced to fly before a much superior enemy, and glad to take shelter in the port he had left so lately. This event, I suppose, will have worse consequences than the mere disappointment, will furnish opposition, as all our ill success has done, with the fuel of dissension, and with the means of thwarting and perplexing administration. Thus all we purchase with the many millions expended yearly, is distress to ourselves, instead of our enemies, and domestic quarrels, instead of victories abroad. It takes a great many blows to knock down a great nation, and, in the case of poor England, a great many heavy ones have not been wanting. They make us reel and stagger, indeed ; but the blow is not yet struck that is to make us fall upon our knees, That fall would save us, but if we fall upon our side at last, we are undone. So much for politics. Next comes news from the north of a different complexion, which it is possible may be news to you,

Mr Fletcher, on his recovery from his late dangerous illness, has started up a Perfectionist. He preached perfection not long since at Dewsbury, where Mr. Powley and his curate heard him. He told the people that he that sinned was no Christian, that he himself did not sin, *ergo* had a right to the appellation. Mr Powley was so shocked by his violent distortion of the Scriptures, by which he attempted to prove his doctrine, that he thought it necessary to preach expressly against him the ensuing Sabbath, and when he was desired to admit the perfect man into his pulpit, of course refused it. I have heard that he is remarkably spiritual. Can this be? Is it possible that a person of that description can be left to indulge himself in such a proud conceit,—is it possible he should be so defective in self-knowledge, and so little acquainted with his own heart? If I had not heard you yourself speak favourably of him, I should little scruple to say, that having spent much of his life, and exerted all his talents, in the defence of Arminian errors, he is at last left to fall into an error more pernicious than Arminius is to be charged with, or the most ignorant of his disciples. When I hear that you are engaged in the propagation of error, I shall believe that an humble and dependant mind is not yet secured from it, and that the promises which annex the blessing of instruction to a temper teachable and truly child-like are to be received *cum grano salis*, and understood with a limitation. Mr Wesley has also been very troublesome in the same place, and asserted, in perfect harmony of sentiment with his brother Fletcher, that Mr Whitefield disseminated more false doctrine in the nation, than he should ever be able to eradicate. Methinks they do not see through a glass darkly, but for want of a glass they see not at all.

I enclose a few lines on a thought which struck me yesterday. If you approve of them, you know what to do with them. I should think they might occupy the place of an introduction, and should call them by that name, if I did not judge the name I have given them necessary for the information of the reader. A flattery-mill is not met with in every street, and my book will, perhaps, fall into the hands of many who do not know that such a mill was ever

invented. It happened to me, however, to spend much of my time in one, when I was a boy, when I frequently amused myself with watching the operation I describe

Mrs. Unwin sends her love, and will be much obliged to Mrs. Newton if she will order her down a loaf of sugar, from nine pence to ten pence the pound, for the use of my sweet self at breakfast. The sugar merchant, if she will be so kind as to give him the necessary instruction, will be paid by the book-keeper at the inn

Yours, my dear Sir,

W. C.

CCI

**LAST DAY OF THE YEAR—POEM ON FRIENDSHIP
LAID ASIDE—ENGLAND AND AMERICA—SPECI-
MEN OF A VISITOR'S CONVERSATION.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

The last day of 1781

YESTERDAY'S post, which brought me yours, brought me a packet from Johnson. We have rescued the middle of the Mahomedan Hog. By the way, your lines, which, when we had the pleasure of seeing you here, you said you would furnish him with, are not inserted in it. I did not recollect till after I had finished the *Matting Mill*, that it bore any affinity to the motto taken from Caraccioli. The resemblance, however, did not appear to me to give any impriety to the verses, as the thought is much enlarged upon, and enlivened by the addition of a new comparison. But if it is not wanted, it is superfluous, and if superfluous, better omitted. I shall not bumble Johnson for finding fault with *Friendship*, though I have a better opinion of it myself, but a poet is, of all men, the most unfit to be judge in his own cause. Partial to all his productions, he is always most partial to the youngest. But as there is a sufficient quantity without it, let that sleep too. If I should live to write again, I may possibly take up that subject a second time, and clothe it in a different dress. It abounds with excellent matter, and much more than I could find room for in two or three pages.

I consider England and America as once one country. They were so, in respect of interest, intercourse, and affinity. A great earthquake has made a partition, and now the Atlantic ocean flows between them. He that can drain that ocean, and shove the two shores together, so as to make them aptly coincide, and meet each other in every part, can unite them again. But this is a work for Omnipotence, and nothing less than Omnipotence can heal the breach between us. This dispensation is evidently a scourge to England, —but is it a blessing to America? Time may prove it one, but it present it does not seem to wear an aspect favourable to their privileges, either civil or religious. I cannot doubt the truth of Dr W's assertion, but the French who pay but little regard to treaties that clash with their convenience, without a treaty, and even in direct contradiction to verbal engagements, can easily pretend a claim to a country which they have both bled and paid for, and if the validity of that claim be disputed, behold an army ready landed, and well-appointed, and in possession of some of the most fruitful provinces, prepared to prove it. A scourge is a scourge at one end only. A bundle of thunderbolts, such as you have seen in the talons of Jupiter's eagle, is at both ends equally tremendous, and can inflict a judgment upon the West, at the same moment that it seems to intend only the chastisement of the East.

In my last letter, in which I desired your opinion of *Ætina*, whether its poetical merits might not atone for its philosophical defects, I begged the favour of Mrs. Newton to get the silk knitting dyed black. Mrs. Unwin will take care of the hams, but the pig is not likely to bequeath them yet. She is sorry that Mrs. Newton has been sick, having one in cure for her at this time. Is very much disappointed that she cannot procure a goose, but has a couple of very fine fowls, which wait your orders, and will be sent at whatever time you shall appoint. She will be glad of a loaf of sugar, the grocer to be paid at the inn.

I should have sent you a longer letter, but a visitor who is more tedious than entertaining has rather disconcerted me, and exhausted my spirits. "Your humble servant, Sir —I hope I see you well —I thank you, Madam, but indifferent.

I have had a violent colic, which providentially took a turn downwards, or I think I must have died. Seven or eight times in a night, Madam My neighbour Banister has the same disorder, and is remarkably costive, so that I verily fear for his life Yes truly, I think the poor man cannot get over it" This is a small specimen—how should you like the whole? I can find you a sheet full of the like whenever you please, taken faithfully from his lips

Our joint love attends you both We rejoice to hear that Mrs Newton is better Yours, my dear sir, W. C

CCII

**SOMETHING MAY COME WHEN THERE IS NO-
THING TO SAY—POPE, DRYDEN, PRIOR,
AND DR. JOHNSON.
1782.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan 5, 1782

Did I allow myself to plead the common excuse of idle correspondents, and esteem it a sufficient reason for not writing, that I have nothing to write about, I certainly should not write now But I have so often found, on similar occasions, when a great penury of matter has seemed to threaten me with an utter impossibility of hatching a letter, that nothing is necessary but to put pen to paper, and go on, in order to conquer all difficulties,—that, availing myself of past experience, I now begin with a most assured persuasion, that sooner or later, one idea naturally suggesting another, I shall come to a most prosperous conclusion

In the last Review, I mean in the last but one I saw Johnson's critique upon Prior and Pope I am bound to acquiesce in his opinion of the latter, because it has always been my own I could never agree with those who preferred him to Dryden, nor with others, (I have known such and persons of taste and discernment too,) who could not allow him to be a poet at all He was certainly a mechanical maker of verses, and in every line he ever wrote, we see indubitable marks of the most indefatigable industry and

labour Writers who find it necessary to make such strenuous and painful exertions, are generally as phlegmatic as they are correct, but Pope was, in this respect, exempted from the common lot of authors of that class. With the unwearied application of a plodding Flemish painter, who draws a shrimp with the most minute exactness, he had all the genius of one of the first masters. Never, I believe, were such talents and such drudgery united. But I admire Dryden most, who has succeeded by mere dint of genius, and in spite of a laziness and carelessness almost peculiar to himself. His faults are numberless, but so are his beauties. His faults are those of a great man, and his beauties are such, (at least sometimes,) as Pope, with all his touching and retouching could never equal. So far, therefore, I have no quarrel with Johnson. But I cannot subscribe to what he says of Prior. In the first place, though my memory may fail me, I do not recollect that he takes any notice of his Solomon, in my mind the best poem, whether we consider the subject of it, or the execution, that he ever wrote. In the next place, he condemns him for introducing Venus and Cupid into his love-verses, and concludes it impossible his passion could be sincere, because when he would express it he has recourse to fables. But when Prior wrote, those deities were not so obsolete as now. His contemporary writers, and some that succeeded him, did not think them beneath their notice. Tibullus, in reality, disbelieved their existence as much as we do, yet Tibullus is allowed to be the prince of all poetical mamoratos, though he mentions them in almost every page. There is a fashion in these things which the Doctor seems to have forgotten. But what shall we say of his old rusty-rusty remarks upon Henry and Emma? I agree with him, that morally considered both the knight and his lady are bad characters, and that each exhibits an example which ought not to be followed. The man dissembles in a way that would have justified the woman had she renounced him, and the woman resolves to follow him at the expense of delicacy, propriety, and even modesty itself. But when the critic calls it a dull dialogue, who but a critic will believe him? There are few readers of poetry of either sex, in this country, who

cannot remember how that enchanting piece has bewitched them, who do not know, that instead of finding it tedious, they have been so delighted with the romantic turn of it, as to have overlooked all its defects, and to have given it a consecrated place in their memories, without ever feeling it a burthen. I wonder almost that, as the Bacchanals served Orpheus, the boys and girls do not tear this husky, dry commentator limb from limb in resentment of such an injury done to their darling poet. I admire Johnson as a man of great erudition and sense; but when he sets himself up for a judge of writers upon the subject of love, a passion which I suppose he never felt in his life, he might as well think himself qualified to pronounce upon a treatise on horsemanship, or the art of fortification.

The next packet I receive will bring me, I imagine, the last proof sheet of my volume, which will consist of about three hundred and fifty pages honestly printed. My public *entrée* therefore is not far distant.

Had we known that the last cheeses were naught, we would not have sent you these. Your mother has however enquired for and found a better dairy, which she means shall furnish you with cheese another year.

Yours

W C

CCIII.

**PRINTER'S DELAY—DIFFICULTY OF ALTERING
A POEM AFTER IT HAS BEEN WRITTEN SOME
CONSIDERABLE TIME—COLONIES—DR. JOHNSON**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan 13, 1782

HAVING just read yours, I begin to answer it, the basket presenting me with a fair opportunity to save a frank, and my time being entirely at my own disposal, which possibly may not be the case to-morrow. As to Johnson, he sometimes promises fair, and proceeds with tolerable despatch, so that I begin to flatter myself with the hope of a speedy publication; then comes an interval of three weeks perhaps, and nothing done. It is a fortnight this day since I re-

turned his last packet, and though one more cover may contain all that is yet behind, I know not but another week at least may elapse before he sends it. Then we are to begin again, and the whole is to undergo a second revision, which, if it proceeds as slowly as the first, will cost another year. In the meanwhile, having some, though not the keenest, feelings of an author, I am not always very well pleased. I suspect that he gives a preference to others who engaged him not so early as myself, and that my distance from the spot is used to my disadvantage. But having other and much weightier cares and concerns to carry, I presently discharge my shoulders of this, and am but little incumbered by it. If it should fall in your way to ask him what he intends, or whether he does not think that we are in some danger of losing the season, considering how much remains to be done, I shall be obliged to you for putting the question to him.

Your answer respecting *Ætna* is quite satisfactory, and gives me much pleasure. I hate altering, though I never refuse the task when propriety seems to enjoin it, and an alteration in this instance, if I am not mistaken, would have been singularly difficult. Indeed, when a piece has been finished two or three years, and an author finds occasion to amend, or make an addition to it, it is not easy to fall upon the very vein from which he drew his ideas in the first instance, but either a different turn of thought, or expression, will betray the patch, and convince a reader of discernment that it has been cobbled and vamped.

I believe I did not thank you for your anecdotes, either foreign or domestic, in my last, therefore I do it now, and still feel myself, as I did at the time, truly obliged to you for them. More is to be learned from one matter of fact than from a thousand speculations. But, alas! what course can government take? I have heard (for I never made the experiment) that if a man grasp a red hot iron with his naked hand it will stick to him, so that he cannot presently disengage himself from it. Such are the colonies in the hands of administration. While they hold them they burn their fingers, and yet they must not quit them. I know not whether your sentiments and mine upon this part of the sub-

ject exactly coincide, but you will know, when you understand what mine are. It appears to me, that the King is bound, both by the duty he owes to himself and to his people, to consider himself with respect to every inch of his territories, as a trustee deriving his interest in them from God, and invested with them by divine authority for the benefit of his subjects. As he may not sell them or waste them, so he may not resign them to an enemy, or transfer his right to govern them to any, not even to themselves so long as it is possible for him to keep it. If he does, he betrays at once his own interest, and that of his other dominions. It may be said, suppose Providence has ordained that they shall be wrested from him, how then? I answer, that cannot appear to be the case, till God's purpose is actually accomplished, and in the mean time the most probable prospect of such an event does not release him from his obligation to hold them to the last moment, for as much as adverse appearances are no infallible indication of God's designs, but may give place to more comfortable symptoms, when we least expect it. Viewing the thing in this light, if I sat on his Majesty's throne, I should be as obstinate as he, because if I quitted the contest, while I had any means left of carrying it on, I should never know that I had not relinquished what I might have retained, or be able to render a satisfactory answer to the doubts and enquiries of my own conscience.

I am rather pleased that you have adopted other sentiments respecting our intended present to the critical Doctor. I allow him to be a man of gigantic talents, and most profound learning, nor have any doubts about the universality of his knowledge. But by what I have seen of his animadversions on the poets, I feel myself much disposed to question, in many instances, either his candour or his taste. He finds fault too often, like a man that, having sought it very industriously, is at last obliged to stick it upon a pin's point, and look at it through a microscope; and I am sure I could easily convict him of having denied many beauties, and overlooked more. Whether his judgment be in itself defective, or whether it be warped by collateral considerations, a writer upon such subjects as I

have chosen would probably find but little mercy at his hands.

We are truly sorry to hear you speak so doubtfully of your journey hither, and hope a substitute will be found ; are thankful for a sight of your new convert's letter, and hope it will prove the harbinger of many yet unborn The sugar has arrived safe, and Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs Newton for her care of it. Poor Peggy ! one would have hoped she might have been safe from such a rencontre in an hospital. We are glad however that she is better. Be pleased to remember us to Sally

Mr Scott will be upon the road to-morrow Our love to you both, and to the young Euphrosyne , the old lady of that name being long since dead, if she pleases she shall fill her vacant office, and be my Muse hereafter.

Yours my dear Sir,

W, C

CCIV.

**DR. JOHNSON—PRIOR VINDICATED AGAINST HIS
REMARKS—ADVICE TO A FATHER.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Jan. 17, 1782.

I AM glad we agree in our opinion of King Critic, and the writers on whom he has bestowed his animadversions It is a matter of indifference to me whether I think with the world at large or not, but I wish my friends to be of my mind. The same work will wear a different appearance in the eyes of the same man, according to the different views with which he reads it ; if merely for his amusement, his candour being in less danger of a twist from interest or prejudice, he is pleased with what is really pleasing, and is not over curious to discover a blemish, because the exercise of a minute exactness is not consistent with his purpose. But if he once becomes a critic by trade, the case is altered. He must then at any rate establish, if he can, an opinion in every mind, of his uncommon discernment, and his exquisite taste. This great end he can never accomplish by thinking in the track that has been beaten under the hoof of pub-

lic judgment. He must endeavour to convince the world, that their favourite authors have more faults than they are aware of, and such as they have never suspected. Having marked out a writer universally esteemed, whom he finds it for that very reason convenient to depreciate and traduce, he will overlook some of his beauties, he will faintly praise others, and in such a manner as to make thousands, more modest, though quite as judicious as himself, question whether they are beauties at all. Can there be a stronger illustration of all that I have said, than the severity of Johnson's remarks upon Prior, I might have said the injustice? His reputation as an author who, with much labour indeed, but with admirable success, has embellished all his poems with the most charming ease, stood unshaken till Johnson thrust his head against it. And how does he attack him in this his principal fort? I can recollect his very words, but I am much mistaken indeed if my memory fails me with respect to the purport of them. "His words," he says, "appear to be forced into their proper places," there indeed we find them, but find likewise that their arrangement has been the effect of constraint, and that without violence they would certainly have stood in a different order." By your leave, most learned Doctor, this is the most disingenuous remark I ever met with, and would have come with a better grace from Curll or Dennis. Every man conversant with verse-writing knows, and knows by painful experience, that the familiar style is of all styles the most difficult to succeed in. To make verse speak the language of prose, without being prosaic,—to marshal the words of it in such an order as they might naturally take in falling from the lips of an extemporary speaker, yet without meanness, harmoniously elegantly, and without seeming to displace a syllable for the sake of the rhyme, is one of the most arduous tasks a poet can undertake. He that could accomplish this task was Prior, many have imitated his excellence in this particular, but the best copies have fallen far short of the original. And now to tell us, after we and our fathers have admired him for it so long, that he is an easy writer indeed, but that his ease has an air of stiffness in it, in short, that his

case is not ease, but only something like it, what is it but a self-contradiction, an observation that grants what it is just going to deny, and denies what it has just granted, in the same sentence, and in the same breath? But I have filled the greatest part of my sheet with a very uninteresting subject. I will only say, that as a nation we are not much indebted, in point of poetical credit, to this too sagacious and unmerciful judge, and that for myself in particular, I have reason to rejoice that he entered upon and exhausted the labours of his office before my poor volume could possibly become an object of them. By the way, you cannot have a book at the time you mention, I have lived a fortnight or more in expectation of the last sheet, which is not yet arrived.

You have already furnished John's memory with by far the greatest part of what a parent would wish to store it with. If all that is merely trivial, and all that has an immoral tendency, were expunged from our English poets, how would they shrink, and how would some of them completely vanish? I believe there are some of Dryden's Fables which he would find very entertaining, they are for the most part fine compositions, and not above his apprehension, but Dryden has written few things that are not blotted here and there with an unchaste allusion, so that you must pick his way for him, lest he should tread in the dirt. You did not mention Milton's *Allegro* and *Penseroso*, which I remember being so charmed with when I was a boy that I was never weary of them. There are even passages in the paradisiacal part of the *Paradise Lost*, which he might study with advantage. And to teach him, as you can, to deliver some of the fine orations made in the *Pandæmonium*, and those between Satan, Ithuriel, and Zephon, with emphasis, dignity, and propriety, might be of great use to him hereafter. The sooner the ear is formed, and the organs of speech are accustomed to the various inflections of the voice, which the rehearsal of those passages demands, the better. I should think too, that Thomson's *Seasons* might afford him some useful lessons. At least they would have a tendency to give his mind an observing and a philosophical turn. I do not forget that he

is but a child But I remember that he is a child favoured with talents superior to his years We were much pleased with his remarks on your almsgiving, and doubt not but it will be verified with respect to the two guineas you sent us, which have made four Christian people happy Ships I have none, nor have touched a pencil these three years, if ever I take it up again, which I rather suspect I shall not (the employment requiring stronger eyes than mine), it shall be at John's service

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C

CCV

**HIS YOUTHFUL PATRIOTISM—CHANGE PRODUCED
IN HIS POLITICAL FEELINGS BY TIME—**

MRS MACAULAY.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan 31, 1782. •

HAVING thanked you for a barrel of very fine oysters, I should have nothing more to say, if I did not determine to say every thing that may happen to occur The political world affords us no very agreeable subjects at present, nor am I sufficiently conversant with it, to do justice to so magnificent a theme, if it did A man that lives as I do, whose chief occupation, at this season of the year, is to walk ten times in a day from the fire-side to his cucumber frame and back again, cannot show his wisdom more, if he has any wisdom to show, than by leaving the mysteries of government to the management of persons, in point of situation and information, much better qualified for the business. Suppose not, however, that I am perfectly an unconcerned spectator, or that I take no interest at all in the affairs of my country; far from it—I read the news—I see that things go wrong in every quarter. I meet, now and then, with an account of some disaster that seems to be the indisputable progeny of treachery, cowardice, or a spirit of faction, I recollect that in those happier days, when you and I could spend our evening in enumerating victories and abductions that seemed to follow each other in a conti-

ued series, there was some pleasure in hearing a politician , and a man might talk away upon so entertaining a subject, without danger of becoming tiresome to others, or incurring weariness himself When poor Bob White brought me the news of Boscawen's success off the coast of Portugal, how did I leap for joy ! When Hawke demolished Confians, I was still more transported But nothing could express my rapture, when Wolfe made the conquest of Quebec I am not, therefore, I suppose destitute of true patriotism, but the course of public events has, of late, afforded me no opportunity to exert it I cannot rejoice, because I see no reason, and I will not murmur, because for that I can find no good one And let me add, he that has seen both sides of fifty, has lived to little purpose, if he has not other views of the world than he had when he was much younger He finds, if he reflects at all, that it will be to the end, what it has been from the beginning, a shifting, uncertain, fluctuating scene , that nations, as well as individuals, have their seasons of infancy, youth, and age If he be an Englishman, he will observe that ours, in particular, is affected with every symptom of decay, and is already sunk into a state of decrepitude I am reading Mrs M 'Aulay's History. I am not quite such a superannuated simpleton, as to suppose that mankind were wiser or much better, when I was young, than they are now But I may venture to assert, without exposing myself to the charge of dotage, that the men whose integrity, courage, and wisdom, broke the bands of tyranny, established our constitution upon its true basis, and gave a people, overwhelmed with the scorn of all countries, and opportunity to emerge into a state of the highest respect and estimation, make a better figure in history than any of the present day are likely to do, when their pretty harangues are forgotten, and nothing shall survive but the remembrance of the views and motives with which they made them.

My dear friend, I have written at random, in every sense, neither knowing what sentiments I should broach, when I began, nor whether they would accord with yours Excuse a rustic, if he errs on such a subject, and believe me sincerely yours,

WM. COWPER.

CCVI.

IMPORTANCE OF MINUTE ACCURACY IN PRINTING.

TO MR. JOHNSON, BOOKSELLER

SIR,

Jan. 31, 1782.

You will find your two queries satisfied by the correction of the press

P 338 Though perhaps the exactest rhymes may not be required in these lighter pieces, I yet choose to be as regular in this particular as I can, I have therefore displaced half a stanza, for the sake of introducing better You will observe that I have made some other corrections, which though they be for the most part but a letter or a stop, were yet such as were very necessary either with regard to the expression or the sense

I am, Sir,

Your most obedient Servant, WM COWPER.

CCVII

**PROGRESS IN THE PRESS—PLEASURES OF COM-
POSITION—A VISITOR—A FUNERAL SERMON.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb. 2, 1782.

THOUGH I value your correspondence highly on its own account, I certainly value it the more in consideration of the many difficulties under which you carry it on Having so many other engagements so much more worthy of your attention, I ought to esteem it, as I do, a singular proof of your friendship, that you so often make an opportunity to bestow a letter upon me and this, not only because mine, which I write in a state of mind not very favourable to religious contemplations, are never worth your reading, but especially because, while you consult my gratification and endeavour to amuse my melancholy, your thoughts are forced out of the only channel in which they delight to flow, and constrained into another so different and so little interesting to a mind like yours, that but for me, and for my sake, they would perhaps never visit it. Though I should be glad therefore to hear from you every

week, I do not complain that I enjoy that privilege but once in a fortnight, but am rather happy to be indulged in it so often

I thank you for the jog you gave Johnson's elbow, communicated from him to the printer it has produced me two more sheets, and two more will bring the business, I suppose to a conclusion I sometimes feel such a perfect indifference with respect to the public opinion of my book, that I am ready to flatter myself no censure of reviewers, or other critical readers, would occasion me the smallest disturbance But not feeling myself constantly possessed of this desirable apathy, I am sometimes apt to suspect, that it is not altogether sincere, or at least that I may lose it just in the moment when I may happen most to want it. Be it however as it may, I am still persuaded that it is not in their power to mortify me much I have intended well, and performed to the best of my ability,—so far was right, and this is a boast of which they cannot rob me If they condemn my poetry, I must even say with Cervantes, "Let them do better if they can!"—if my doctrine, they judge that which they do not understand, I shall except to the jurisdiction of the court, and plead, *Coram non judice* Even Horace could say, he would neither be the plumper for the praise, nor the leaner for the condemnation of his readers, and it will prove me wanting to myself indeed, if, supported by so many sublimer considerations than he was master of, I cannot sit loose to popularity, which, like the wind, bloweth where it listeth, and equally out of our command ' If you, and two or three more such as you, say, well done ' It ought to give me more contentment than if I could earn Churchill's laurels, and by the same means

Mr Raban has spent an hour with us since he received your last, but did not mention it We are not of his privy council He knows our sentiments upon some subjects too well to favour us with a very intimate place in his confidence. He is civil, indeed at least not intentionally otherwise, and this is all we can say of him Some people in our circumstances would hardly say so much As soon as he is seated, he stretches out his legs at their full length, crosses his feet, folds his arms, reclines his head upon his

shoulder, yawns frequently, seems not unwilling to hear and to be entertained, but never opens a subject himself, or assists the conversation with any remarks. This is not always pleasing

* * * *

George-Mayne, whom I suppose you remember, a farmer that lived on the beautiful side of a hill in Weston parish, died last week. If you recollect the man, you recollect too that he made it his principal glory to believe that he and his two mastiffs would come to one and the same conclusion, and that no part of either would survive the grave. Mr Page attended him, preached his funeral sermon, and informed the largest congregation ever seen at Weston that he converted him. I cannot learn however that any competent judge of the matter has given the tale a moment's credit, or that any better proof of this wonder has been produced, than that poor George desired to be buried in his pew, to make some amends I suppose for having never visited it while he lived.

* * * *

Yours, my dear sir, W C

[Parts of this letter have perished]

CCVIII

SCHOOLBOY'S VERSES—BISHOP LOWTH—COWPER'S OPINION OF CHARLES I FORMED FROM MRS. MACAULAY—LADY AUSTEN.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 9, 1792.

I THANK you for Mr Lowth's verses. They are so good, that had I been present when he spoke them, I should have trembled for the boy, lest the man should disappoint the hopes such early genius had given birth to. It is not common to see so lively a fancy so correctly managed, and so free from irregular exuberances, at so unexperienced an age, fruitful, yet not wanton, and gay without being tawdry. When school-boys write verse, if they have any fire at all, it generally spends itself in flashes, and transient sparks,

which may indeed suggest an expectation of something better hereafter, but deserve not to be much commended for any real merit of their own. Their wit is generally forced and false, and their sublimity, if they affect any, bombast. I remember well when it was thus with me, and when a turgid, noisy, unmeaning speech in a tragedy, which I should now laugh at, afforded me raptures, and filled me with wonder. It is not in general till reading and observation have settled the taste, that we can give the prize to the best writing, in preference to the worst. Much less are we able to execute what is good ourselves. But Lowth seems to have stepped into excellence at once, and to have gained by intuition, what we little folks are happy, if we can learn at last, after much labour of our own, and instruction of others. The compliments he pays to the memory of King Charles, he would probably now retract, though he be a Bishop, and his Majesty's zeal for episcopacy was one of the causes of his ruin. An age or two must pass, before some characters can be properly understood. The spirit of party employs itself in veiling their faults, and ascribing to them virtues which they never possessed. See Charles's face drawn by Clarendon, and it is a handsome portrait. See it more justly exhibited by Mrs. Macaulay, and it is deformed to a degree that shocks us. Every feature expresses cunning, employing itself in the attainment of tyranny and dissimulation, pretending itself an advocate for truth.

I have a piece of secret history to communicate which I would have imparted sooner, but that I thought it possible there might be no occasion to mention it at all. When persons for whom I have felt a friendship, disappoint and mortify me by their conduct, or act unjustly towards me, though I no longer esteem them friends, I still feel that tenderness for their character that I would conceal the blemish if I could. But in making known the following anecdote to you, I run no risk of a publication, assured that when I have once enjoined you secrecy, you will observe it.

• My letters have already apprized you of that close and intimate connexion that took place between the lady you visited in Queen Ann Street, and us. Nothing could be more

promising, though sudden in the commencement. She treated us with as much unreservedness of communication, as if we had been born in the same house, and educated together. At her departure, she herself proposed a correspondence, and because writing does not agree with your mother, proposed a correspondence with me. This sort of intercourse had not been long maintained, before I discovered, by some slight intimations of it, that she had conceived displeasure at somewhat I had written, though I cannot now recollect it. conscious of none but the most upright inoffensive intentions, I yet apologised for the passage in question, and the flaw was healed again. Our correspondence after this proceeded smoothly for a considerable time, but at length having had repeated occasion to observe that she expressed a sort of romantic idea of our merits, and built such expectations of felicity upon our friendship, as we were sure that nothing human could possibly answer, I wrote to remind her that we were mortal, to recommend it to her not to think more highly of us than the subject would warrant, and intimating that when we embellish a creature with colours taken from our own fancy, and so adorned, admire and praise it beyond its real merits, we make it an idol, and have nothing to expect in the end, but that it will deceive our hopes, and that we shall derive nothing from it but a painful conviction of our error. Your mother heard me read the letter, she read it herself, and honoured it with her warm approbation. But it gave mortal offence, it received indeed an answer, but such an one as I could by no means reply to, and there ended (for it was impossible it should ever be renewed) a friendship that bid fair to be lasting, being formed with a woman whose seeming stability, of temper, whose knowledge of the world, and great experience of its folly, but above all, whose sense of religion, and seriousness of mind, (for with all that gaiety, she is a great thinker,) induced us both, in spite of that cautious reserve that marks our characters, to trust her, to love and value her, and to open our hearts for her reception. It may be necessary to add, that by her own desire I wrote to her under the assumed relation of a brother, and she to me as my sister.—*Ceu fumus in auris.*

I thank you for the search you have made after my intended motto, but I no longer need it. I have left myself no room for politics, that subject therefore must be postponed to a future letter. Our love is always with yourself and family. We have recovered from the concern we suffered on account of the fracas above mentioned, though for some days it made us unhappy. Not knowing but that she might possibly become sensible in a few days that she had acted hastily and unreasonably, and renew the correspondence herself, I could not in justice apprize you of this quarrel sooner, but some weeks having passed without any proposals of accommodation, I am now persuaded, that none are intended, and in justice to you am obliged to caution you against a repetition of your visit.

Yours, my dear friend,

W. C.

CCIX

PLEASURE IN WRITING—CONVICTION THAT WHATEVER POWER HE MAY POSSESS IS GIVEN HIM.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 16, 1782.

LEST the grumbling strain of my last should have an effect upon you which I did not intend, and occasion you another journey to Johnson's in order that you might inspire him with a little more alacrity in his work, I now write to inform you that he has, for the present at least, silenced all my complaints, by sending me the whole book except the two last sheets, which he gives me reason to expect tomorrow. When I have returned the parcel, which I mean to do by the diligence on Monday, this tedious business, so far as I am concerned in it, will be over, nothing more will then be requisite but to keep the press going till the number he designs are printed, which I suppose will demand no great length of time, as I have heard that the expedition with which they can work off a book, when the press is once set, is wonderful.

Caraccioli says—"There is something very bewitching in

authorship, and that he who has once written will write again." It may be so—I can subscribe to the former part of his assertion from my own experience, having never found an amusement, among the many I have been obliged to have recourse to, that so well answered the purpose for which I used it. The quieting and composing effect of it was such, and so totally absorbed have I sometimes been in my rhyming occupation, that neither the past nor the future, (those themes which to me are so fruitful in regret at other times,) had any longer a share in my contemplation. For this reason I wish, and have often wished since the fit left me, that it would seize me again, but hitherto I have wished it in vain. I see no want of subject, but I feel a total disability to discuss them. Whether it is thus with other writers, or not I am ignorant, but I should suppose my case in this respect a little peculiar. The voluminous writers at least whose vein of fancy seems always to have been rich in proportion to their occasions, cannot have been so unlike, and so unequal to themselves. There is this difference between my poetship and the generality of *them*,—they have been ignorant how much they have stood indebted to an Almighty power, for the exercise of those talents they have supposed their own, whereas I know, and know most perfectly, and am perhaps to be taught it to the last, that my power to think, whatever it be, and consequently my power to compose, is, as much as my outward form, afforded to me by the same hand that makes me in any respect to differ from a brute. This lesson if not constantly inculcated might perhaps be forgotten, or at least too slightly remembered,—an evil of which I am in no danger, for if all that ancient mythologists have invented of a forked hill, a fountain, a god of verse, and his verse inspiring—*cætera desunt*
 [Part of this letter has been torn off] W C

CCX.

DOUBTS CONCERNING THE PREFACE—LADY AUSTEN—THURLOW—CONTESTED ELECTION.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 24, 1782.

If I should receive a letter from you to-morrow, you must

still remember that I am not in your debt, having paid you by anticipation — Knowing that you take an interest in my publication, and that you have waited for it with some impatience, I write to inform you that, if it is possible for a printer to be punctual, I shall come forth on the first of March. I have ordered two copies to Stock, one for Mr. John Unwin — It is possible after all, that my book may come forth without a Preface Mr Newton has written, (he could indeed write no other,) a very sensible as well as a very friendly one, and it is printed But the bookseller, who knows him well, and esteems him highly, is anxious to have it cancelled, and with my consent first obtained, has offered to negotiate that matter with the author He judges, that, though it would serve to recommend the volume to the religious, it would disgust the profane, and that there is in reality no need of any Preface at all. I have found Johnson a very judicious man on other occasions, and am therefore willing that he should determine for me upon this

Having imparted to you an account of the fracas between us and Lady Austen, it is necessary that you should be made acquainted with every event that bears any relation to that incident The day before yesterday she sent me, by her brother-in-law, Mr Jones, three pair of worked ruffles, with advice that I should soon receive a fourth I knew they were begun before we quarrelled I begged Mr Jones to tell her when he wrote next, how much I thought myself obliged, and gave him to understand that I should make her a very inadequate, though the only return in my power, by laying my volume at her feet This likewise she had previous reason given to expect Thus stands the affair at present, whether any thing in the shape of a reconciliation is to take place hereafter, I know not; but this I know, that when an amicable freedom of intercourse, and that unreserved confidence which belongs only to true friendship, has been once unrooted, plant it again with what care you may, it is very difficult, if not impossible to make it grow The fear of giving offence to a temper too apt to take it, is unfavourable to that comfort we propose to ourselves even in our ordinary connexions, but absolutely incompatible with the pleasures of real friendship

She is to spend the summer in our neighbourhood, Lady Peterborough and Miss Mordaunt are to be of the party, the former a dissipated woman of fashion, and the latter a haughty beauty. Retirement is our passion and our delight, it is in still life alone we look for that measure of happiness we can rationally expect below. What have we to do therefore with characters like these? shall we go to the dancing school again? shall we cast off the simplicity of our plain and artless demeanour, to learn, and not in a youthful day neither, the manners of those whose manners at the best are their only recommendation, and yet can in reality recommend them to none, but to people like themselves? This would be folly which nothing but necessity could excuse, and in our case no such necessity can possibly obtain. We will not go into the world, and if the world would come to us, we must give it the French answer—*Monsieur et Madam ne sont pas visibles*,

There are but few persons to whom I present my book. The Lord Chancellor is one. I enclose in a packet I send by this post to Johnson a letter to his Lordship which will accompany the volume, and to you I enclose a copy of it, because I know you will have a friendly curiosity to see it. An author is an important character. Whatever his merits may be, the mere circumstances of authorship warrants his approach to persons, whom otherwise perhaps he could hardly address without being deemed impertinent. He can do me no good. If I should happen to do him a little I shall be a greater man than he. I have ordered a copy likewise to Mr. Robert Smith.

Lord Sandwich has been hard run, but I consider the push that has been made to displace him as the effort of a faction, rather than as the struggle of true patriotism convinced of his delinquency, and desirous to sacrifice him to the interests of the country. Without public virtue public prosperity cannot be long lived, and where must we look for it? it seems indeed to have a share in the motives that animate one or two of the popular party; but grant them sincere, which is a very charitable concession, the rest are evidently naught, and the quantity of salt is too small to season the mass.

I hope John continues to be pleased, and to give pleasure
 if he loves instruction, he has a tutor who can give him
 plentifully of what he loves, and with his natural abilities,
 his progress must be such as you would wish

Yours,

W C

CCXI

OBJECTIONS TO THE PREFACE BY MR. BATES AND THE PUBLISHER—REFERENCE TO HIS MALADY—REMARKS ON A FAST SER- MON—IMPROVEMENTS AT ONLEY.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

February, 1782

It is not possible for me, as it used to be, to answer a
 Sunday's letter by the return of the post. It goes out be-
 fore it comes in. A new and very inconvenient regulation
 I am now obliged to get all my despatches ready by nine
 or ten in the morning. Methinks I express myself like a
 secretary of state

I enclose Johnson's upon the subject of the Preface, and
 would send you my reply to it, if I had kept a copy. This
 however was the purport of it. That Mr Bates, whom I
 described as you described him to me, had made a similar
 objection, but that being willing to hope, that two or three
 pages of sensible matter, well expressed, might possibly go
 down, though of a religious cast, I was resolved to believe
 him mistaken, and to pay no regard to it. That his judg-
 ment however, who by his occupation is bound to under-
 stand what will promote the sale of a book, and what will
 hinder it, seemed to deserve more attention. That therefore,
 according to his own offer written on a small slip of paper
 now lost, I should be obliged to him if he would state his
 difficulties to you adding, that I need not inform him,
 who is so well acquainted with you, that he would find you
 easy to be persuaded to sacrifice, if necessary, what you had
 written, to the interests of the book. I find he has had an
 interview with you upon the occasion, and your behaviour

in it has verified my prediction. What course he determines upon I do not know, nor am I at all anxious about it. It is impossible for me however to be so insensible of your kindness in writing the Preface, as not to be desirous of defying all contingencies rather than entertain a wish to suppress it. It will do me honour in the eyes of those whose good opinion is indeed an honour, and if it hurts me in the estimation of others, I cannot help it, the fault is neither yours nor mine, but theirs. If a minister's is a more splendid character than a poet's, and I think nobody that understands their value can hesitate in deciding that question, then undoubtedly the advantage of having our names united in the same volume is all on my side—but to say truth, though I may find a transient amusement, I have no sincere pleasure in any thing. Sufficient care is taken by my nightly instructors that I shall not forget my whereabouts. Reminded as I am continually, and always knowing it to be true, that I am a foreigner to the system I inhabit, I cannot if I would deceive myself into an opinion that I have any real interest in any thing here. I know that this persuasion would be thought sufficient evidence of frenzy were it produced before a jury under a commission of lunacy, but it is not the less a fact, neither is it to me the least distressing part of it, that it is a fact of which I can convince nobody, because though convinced myself, it is impossible I should produce any proof of it, but let this pass—it will be known in due time.

We thank for the Fast-sermon. I had not read two pages before I exclaimed,—'The man has read Expostulation.' But though there is a strong resemblance between the two pieces in point of matter, and sometimes the very same expressions are to be met with, yet I soon recollected that, on such a theme, a striking coincidence of both might happen without a wonder. I doubt not that it is the production of an honest man, it carries with it an air of sincerity and zeal, that is not easily counterfeited. But though I can see no reason why kings should not sometimes hear of their faults, as well as other men, I think I see many good ones why they should not be reprov'd so publicly. It can hardly be done with that respect which is due to their office, on the

part of the author, or without encouraging a spirit of unmannerly censure in his readers His majesty too perhaps might answer—"my own personal feelings and offences I am ready to confess, but were I to follow your advice, and cashier the profligate from my service, where must I seek men of faith, and true Christian piety, qualified by nature and by education to succeed them?" Business must be done, men of business alone can do it, and *good* men are rarely found under that description When Nathan reproved David, he did not employ a Herald, or accompany his charge with the sound of the trumpet, nor can I think the writer of this sermon quite justifiable in exposing the king's faults in the sight of the people

These two last posts our news has failed us. This has occasioned our hiring one, and has given us an opportunity to discover that we can be furnished at Olney with six Morning Chronicles in the week, for three shillings and three pence a quarter. We shall be obliged to you therefore if you will pay our London newsmonger, and tell him we have no further need of him

Daniel Raban has levelled and gravelled the market hill, and because water is scarce at Olney, has put the parish to the expense of a town pump, and designs, in order that people may not run their heads against it in the night, to crown it with a lamp As the people here are not so rich as to be able to afford superfluities, this measure does not give universal satisfaction. I subjoin the only verses I have written for some time, which however are not to be published. The pump stands opposite Banister's door.

Let Banister now lend his aid
To furnish shoes for the Baker,
Who has put down a pump, with a lamp on its head,
For the use of the said Shoe-maker

Many thanks for the tongues and the nuts. one of the latter is remarkably fine. The money shall be paid as directed, I enclose a list of my gifted readers, that you may not purchase for those to whom I intend a present. I shall send Lord Dartmouth a card by the present post We are as ever yours and Mrs. Newton's.

WM. COWPER.

My coach is full Mr Jones cannot have a place in it till next time.

CCXII

**POLITICS—OLIVER CROMWELL—MRS. MACAULAY'S
HISTORY—UNFAVOURABLE SEASON.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 6, 1782

THE tempting occasion of a basket directed to you, seldom fails to produce a letter, not that I have any thing to say, but because I can say anything, therefore I seize the present opportunity to address you. Some subject will be sure to present itself, and the first that offers shall be welcome.

Is peace the nearer because our patriots have resolved that it is desirable? Will the victory they have gained in the House of Commons be attended with any other consequences than the mortification of the King, the embarrassment of ministry, and perhaps Lord North's resignation? Do they expect the same success on other occasions, and having once gained a majority, are they to be the majority for ever? —These are the questions we agitate by the fireside in an evening, without being able to come to any certain conclusion, partly I suppose because the subject is in itself uncertain, and partly because we are not furnished with the means of understanding it. I find the politics of times past far more intelligible than those of the present. Time has thrown light upon what was obscure, and decided what was ambiguous. The characters of great men, which are always mysterious while they live, are ascertained by the faithful historian, and sooner or later receive their wages of fame or infamy, according to their true deserts. How have I seen sensible and learned men burn incense to the memory of Oliver Cromwell, ascribing to him, as the greatest hero of the world, the dignity of the British empire during the interregnum. A century passed before that idol, which seemed to be of gold, was proved to be a wooden one. The fallacy however was at length detected, and the honour of that de

tection has fallen to the share of a woman. I do not know whether you have read Mrs Macaulay's history of that period. She handled him more roughly than the Scots did at the battle of Dunbar, where, though he gained a victory, he received a wound in his head, that had almost made it his last, and spoiled him for a Protector. He would have thought it little worth his while to have broken through all obligations divine and human, to have wept crocodile tears, and wrapped himself up in the obscurity of speeches that nobody could understand, could he have foreseen that in the ensuing century a lady's scissars would clip his laurels close and expose his naked villany to the scorn of all posterity. This however has been accomplished, and so effectually, that I suppose it is not in the power of the most artificial management to make them grow again. Even the sagacious of mankind are blind when Providence leaves them to be deluded, so blind, that a tyrant shall be mistaken for a true patriot, true patriots (such were the Long Parliament) shall be abhorred as tyrants, and almost a whole nation shall dream, that they have the full enjoyment of liberty, for years after such a crafty knave as Oliver shall have stolen it completely from them. I am indebted for all this show of historical knowledge to Mr Bull, who has lent me five volumes of the work I mention. I was willing to display it while I have it, in a twelve month's time I shall remember almost nothing of the matter.

I wrote to Lord Dartmouth to apprise him of my intended present, and have received a very affectionate and obliging answer. But not having received the volume myself, I suppose it is not yet published, though the first of the month was the day fixed for the publication.

No winter since we knew Olney has kept us more closely confined than the present, either the ways have been so dirty or the weather so rough, that we have not more than three times escaped into the fields since last autumn. This does not suit Mrs Unwin, to whom air and exercise, her only remedies, are almost absolutely necessary. Neither are my frequent calls into the garden altogether sufficient for me. Man, a changeable creature himself, seems to subsist best in a state of variety, as his proper element. A melan-

choly man at least is apt to grow sadly weary of the same walls and the same pales, and to find that the same scene will suggest the same thoughts perpetually

Mrs Unwin hopes the chickens will prove good, though not so fat as she generally makes them. She has sent the two guineas for the box, and I the layers and pinks I mentioned. When the bulbs are taken up at Michaelmas, Mrs Newton shall receive a parcel of all the sorts. Though I have spoken of the utility of changes, we neither feel nor wish for any in our friendships, and consequently stand just where we did with respect to your whole self. Other friends than you we have none, nor expect any.

Yours, my dear Sir, WM. COWPER

The cocoa nuts were equally good, and one of the tongues proved a very fine one, we have not dressed the other

CCXIII

HOPES OF SEEING HIM AND HIS FAMILY ON THEIR WAY TO YORKSHIRE—LADY AUSTEN —SUNDAY ROUTS

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 7, 1782

WE have great pleasure in the contemplation of your Northern journey, as it promises us a sight of you and yours, by the way, and are only sorry that Miss Shuttleworth cannot be of the party. A line to ascertain the hour when we may expect you, by the next preceding post, will be welcome.

We are far from wishing a renewal of the connexion we have lately talked about. We did indeed find it in a certain way an agreeable one while that lady continued in the country, yet not altogether compatible with our favourite plan, with that silent retirement in which we have spent so many years, and in which we wish to spend what are yet before us. She is exceedingly sensible, has great quickness of parts, and an uncommon fluency of expression, but her vivacity was sometimes too much for us, occasionally

perhaps it might refresh and revive us, but it more frequently exhausted us, neither your mother nor I being in that respect at all a match for her. But after all, it does not entirely depend upon us, whether our former intimacy shall take place again or not, or rather whether we shall attempt to cultivate it or give it, over, as we are most inclined to do, in despair. I suspect a little by her sending the ruffles, and by the terms in which she spoke of us to you, that some overtures on her part are to be looked for. Should this happen, however we may wish to be reserved, we must not be rude, but I can answer for us both, that we shall enter into the connection again with great reluctance, not hoping for any better fruit of it than it has already produced. If you thought she fell short of the description I gave of her, I still think however that it was not a partial one, and that it did not make too favourable a representation of her character. You *must* have seen her to a disadvantage, a consciousness of a quarrel so recent, and in which she had expressed herself with a warmth that she knew must have affronted and shocked us both, must unavoidably have produced its effect upon her behaviour, which though it could not be awkward, must have been in some degree unnatural, her attention being necessarily pretty much engrossed by a recollection of what had passed between us. I would by no means have hazarded you into her company, if I had not been sure that she would treat you with politeness, and almost persuaded that she would soon see the unreasonableness of her conduct, and make a suitable apology.

It is not much for my advantage, that the printer delays so long to gratify your expectation. It is a state of mind that is apt to tire and disconcert us, and there are but few pleasures that make us amends for the pain of repeated disappointment. I take it for granted you have not received the volume, not having received it myself, nor indeed heard from Johnson, since he fixed the first of the month for its publication.

• What a medley are our public prints, half the page filled with the ruin of the country, and the other half filled with the vices and pleasures of it,—here an island taken, and

there a new comedy ;—here an empire lost, and there an Italian opera, or the Duke of Gloucester's rout on a Sunday !

"May it please your R. H. ! I am an Englishman, and must stand or fall with the nation Religion, its true Palladium, has been stolen away, and it is crumbling into dust Sin ruins us, the sins of the great especially, and of their sins especially the violation of the sabbath, because it is naturally productive of all the rest It is fit that a Prince should make the sabbath a day of dissipation, and that not content with his own personal profanation of it, he should invite all whose rank entitles them to the honour of such distinction, to partake with him in his guilt ? Are examples operative in proportion to the dignity of those who set them ? Whose then more pernicious than your own in this flagrant instance of impiety ? For shame, Sir !—if you wish well to your brother's arms, and would be glad to see the kingdom emerging again from her ruins, pay more respect to an ordinance that deserves the deepest ! I do not say pardon this short remonstrance,——The concern I feel for my country, and the interest I have in its prosperity, give me a right to make it. I am, &c."

Thus one might write to his Highness, and (I suppose) might be as profitably employed in whistling the tune of an old ballad Lord P.——had a rout too on the same day—Is ne the son of that P.——, who bought Punch for a hundred pounds, and having kept him a week, tore him limb from limb because he was sullen and would not speak ?—Probably he is

I have no copy of the Preface, nor do I know at present how Johnson and Mr Newton have settled it In the matter of it there was nothing offensively peculiar But it was thought too pious

Your, my dear friend,

W C

CCXIV

**PUBLISHER'S USEFUL CRITICISMS—COMPARISONS
BETWEEN SIMON BROWNE'S CASE AND
HIS OWN.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 14, 1782

I CAN only repeat what I said some time since, that the world is grown more foolish and careless than it was when I had the honour of knowing it. Though your Preface was of a serious cast, it was yet free from every thing that might, with propriety, expose it to the charge of Methodism, being guilty of no offensive peculiarities, nor containing any of those obnoxious doctrines at which the world is so apt to be angry, and which we must give her leave to be angry at, because we know she cannot help it. It asserted nothing more than every rational creature must admit to be true,—“that divine and earthly things can no longer stand in competition with each other, in the judgment of any man, than while he continues ignorant of their respective value and that the moment the eyes are opened, the latter are always cheerfully relinquished for the sake of the former.” Now I do most certainly remember the time when such a proposition as this would have been at least supportable, and when it would not have spoiled the market of any volume to which it had been prefixed, *ergo*—the times are altered for the worse.

I have reason to be very much satisfied with my publisher. He marked such lines as did not please him, and as often I could, I paid all possible respect to his animadversions. You will accordingly find, at least if you recollect how they stood in the MS., that several passages are the better for having undergone his critical notice. Indeed I do not know where I could have found a bookseller who could have pointed out to me my defects with more discernment, and as I find it is a fashion for modern bards to publish the names of the literati who have favoured their works with a revision, would myself most willingly have acknowledged my obligations to Johnson, and so I told him. I am to thank you likewise, and ought to have done it in the first place, for having re-

commended to me the suppression of some lines, which I am now more than ever convinced would at least have done me no honour

I was not unacquainted with Mr. Browne's extraordinary case, before you favoured me with his letter and his intended dedication to the Queen, though I am obliged to you for a sight of those two curiosities, which I do not recollect to have ever seen till you sent them. I could, however, were it not a subject that would make us all melancholy, point out to you some essential differences between his state of mind and my own, which would prove mine to be by far the most deplorable of the two. I suppose no man would despair, if he did not apprehend something singular in the circumstances of his own story, something that discriminates it from that of every other man, and that induces despair as an inevitable consequence. You may encounter his unhappy persuasion with as many instances as you please, of persons who, like him, having renounced all hope, were yet restored, and may thence infer that he, like them shall meet with a season of restoration—but it is in vain. Every such individual accounts himself an exception to all rules, and therefore the blessed reverse, that others have experienced, affords no ground of comfortable expectation to *him*. But you will say, it is reasonable to conclude that as all your predecessors in this vale of misery and horror have found themselves delightfully disappointed at last, so will you:—I grant the reasonableness of it, it would be sinful, perhaps, because uncharitable, to reason otherwise, but an argument, hypothetical in its nature, however rationally conducted, may lead to a false conclusion, and in this instance so will yours. But I forbear. For the cause above mentioned, I will say no more, though it is a subject on which I could write more than the mail would carry. I must deal with you as I deal with poor Mrs Unwin, in all our disputes about it, cutting all controversy short by an appeal to the event

MY DEAR MADAM,

We return you many thanks, in the first place for a pot of scallops excellently pickled, and in the second for the snuff-box. We admired it, even when we supposed the price

of it two guineas ; guess then with what raptures we contemplated it when we found that it cost but one It was genteel before, but then it became a perfect model of elegance, and worthy to be the desire of all noses.

Your own hams not being dry, Mrs. Unwin begs your acceptance of one of hers, together with a couple of fowls, and would have sent some brocoli, but has none—a reason for not sending it, which, however to be lamented, must yet be allowed a satisfactory one. Dear Madam,

We are yours and Sir's most

Affectionately and truly

WM C AND M U

CCXV.

FISH—HIS BOOK IS PUBLISHED, AND ITS ACCEPT- ANCE TO DETERMINE WHETHER HE SHALL ENTER UPON ANOTHER VOLUME

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 14, 1782,

As servant maids, and such sort of folks, account a letter good for nothing, unless it begins with—This comes hoping you are well, as I am at this present • so I should be chargeable with a great omission, were I not to make frequent use of the following grateful exordium—Many thanks for a fine cod and oysters—Your bounty never arrived more seasonably. I had just been observing that among other deplorable effects of the war, the scarcity of fish which it occasioned, was severely felt at Olney, but your plentiful supply immediately reconciled me, though not to the war, yet to my small share in the calamities it produces.

I hope my bookseller has paid due attention to the order I gave him to furnish you with my books. The composition of those pieces afforded me an agreeable amusement at intervals, for about a twelve month, and I should be glad to devote the leisure hours of another twelve month to the same occupation, at least, if my lucubrations should meet with a favourable acceptance. But I cannot write when I would, and whether I shall find readers, is a problem not

yet decided So the Muse and I are parted for the present
 I sent Lord Thurlow a volume, and a letter with it, which
 I communicate because you will undoubtedly have some
 curiosity to see it. Yours, WM COWPER

CCXVI

PLEASED WITH HIS FAVOURABLE OPINION OF
 THE POEMS—THURLOW- MR. UNWIN'S EN-
 DEAVOURS IN BEHALF OF THE
 PRISONERS.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 18, 1782

NOTHING has given me so much pleasure, since the publication of my volume, as your favourable opinion of it. It may possibly meet with acceptance from hundreds, whose commendation would afford me no other satisfaction than what I should find in the hope that it might do them good. I have some neighbours in this place, who say they like it,—doubtless I had rather they should than that they should not,—but I know them to be persons of no more taste in poetry, than skill in the mathematics, their applause therefore is a sound that has no music in it for me. But my vanity was not so entirely quiescent when I read your friendly account of the manner in which it had affected *you*. It was tickled, and pleased, and told me in a pretty loud whisper, that others perhaps of whose taste and judgment I had a high opinion, would approve it too. As a giver of good counsel, I wish to please all,—as an author, I am perfectly indifferent to the judgment of all, except the few who are indeed judicious. The circumstance however in your letter which pleased me most was, that you wrote in high spirits, and though you said much suppressed more, lest you should hurt my delicacy, my delicacy is obliged to you,—but you observe it is not so quiet, but that after it has feasted upon praise expressed, it can find a comfortable dessert in the contemplation of praise implied. I now feel as if I should be glad to begin another volume, but from the will to the power is a step

too wide for me to take at present, and the season of the year brings with it so many avocations into the garden, where I am my own *fac totum*, that I have little or no leisure for the quite. I should do myself much wrong, were I to omit mentioning the great complacency with which I read your narrative of Mrs. Unwin's smiles and tears, persons of much sensibility are always persons of taste, a taste for poetry depends indeed upon that very article more than upon any other. If she had Aristotle by heart, I should not esteem her judgment so highly, were she defective in point of feeling, as I do and must esteem it, knowing her to have such feelings as Aristotle could not communicate, and as half the readers in the world are destitute of. This it is that makes me set so high a price upon your mother's opinion. She is a critic by nature, and not by rule, and has a perception of what is good or bad in composition, that I never know deceive her, insomuch, that when two sorts of expression have pleaded equally for the preference in my own esteem, and I have referred, as in such cases I always did, the decision of the point to her, I never knew her at a loss for a just one.

Whether I shall receive any answer from his Chancellorship or not, is at present *in ambiguo*, and will probably continue in the same state of ambiguity much longer. He is so busy a man, and at this time, if the papers may be credited, so particularly busy, that I am forced to mortify myself with the thought, that both my book and my letter may be thrown into a corner as too insignificant for a statesman's notice, and never found till his executor finds them. This affair however is neither *ad my libitum* nor his. I have sent him the truth, and the truth which I know he is ignorant of. He that put it into the heart of a certain eastern monarch, to amuse himself one sleepless night with listening to the records of his kingdom, is able to give birth to such another occasion in Lord Thurlow's instance, and inspire him with a curiosity to know what he has received from a friend he once loved and valued. If an answer comes however, you shall not long be a stranger to the contents of it.

I have read your letter to their Worships, and much approve of it. May it have the effect it ought! If not, still you have acted and humane and becoming part, and the poor aching toes and fingers of the prisoners will not appear in judgment against you. I have made a slight alteration in the last sentence, which perhaps you will not disapprove

Yours ever, W. C

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CCXVII.

**PLEASED WITH HIS PRAISE—UTILITY HIS AIM
IN WRITING—INVITATION TO OLNEY.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM RULL.

MY DEAR SIR,

March 24, 1782.

If you had only commended me as a poet, I should have swallowed your praises whole, have smacked my lips, and made no reply, but as you offer me your friendship, and account me worthy of your affection, which I esteem a much greater honour than that of being a poet, though even approved by you, it seems necessary that I should not be quite dumb upon so interesting an occasion.

Your letter gave me great pleasure, both as a testimony of your approbation, and of your regard. I wrote in hopes of pleasing you, and such as you, and though I must confess that, at the same time, I cast a side-long glance at the good liking of the world at large, I believe I can say it was more for the sake of their advantage and instruction than their praise. They are children: if we give them physic, we must sweeten the rim of the cup with honey. If my book is so far honoured as to be made a vehicle of true knowledge to any that are ignorant, I shall rejoice, and do already rejoice that it has procured me a proof of your esteem, whom I had rather please than all the writers of both Reviews.

When your leisure and your health will allow you to trot over to Olney, you will most assuredly be welcome to us both, and even welcome if you please to light your pipe with the page in question.

Yours, my dear friend, affectionately, WM COWPER

CCXVIII

THANKS FOR BOOKS—MR MILNER.

TO THE REV WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR SIR,

Tuesday morning

BEHOLD the plan of your future operations ! which, as I have told Mr Newton, the man being found who is able to carry it into practice, ought not to be called Utopian It must be returned to London in the course of the next ten days, by you if you have opportunity to send it , if not, by me In the latter case you will be so kind as to remit it to Olney in due season.

I have loaded Mr Dunville with your books, and return you many thanks for the use of them Mr Milner's gave me great pleasure, as a sensible, just, and temperate piece of argument. I only regret that, having it in his power to be perfectly correct in his expression, he should suffer any inaccuracies to escape him Such mistakes in an advocate for the truth, however venial in others, are sure to be marked by the critics, and magnified to the disadvantage of his cause

I heartily wish you many comfortable whiffs to-day, and every day, especially when you come to whiff in the green house

Yours, WM C

CCXIX

A GOOD TRUMPETER—THURLOW—WISHES HIM TO REVIEW HIS POEMS.

TO THE REV. W UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 1, 1782.

I COULD not have found a better trumpeter. Your zeal to serve the interest of my volume, together with your extensive acquaintance, qualify you perfectly for that most useful office. Methinks I see you with the long tube at your mouth, proclaiming to your numerous connexions my poetical merits, and at proper intervals levelling it at Olney, and pouring into my ear the welcome sound of their approbation. I need not encourage you to proceed, your breath will never fail in such a cause ; and thus encouraged, I my-

self perhaps may proceed also, and when the versifying fit returns produce another volume. Alas ! we shall never receive such commendations from him on the woolsack, as your good friend has lavished upon us. He has great abilities, but no religion. Mr Hill told him some time since that I was going to publish, to which piece of information, so far as I can learn, he returned no answer, for Mr Hill has not reported any to me. He had afterwards an opportunity to converse with him in private, but my poor authorship was not so much as mentioned. Whence I learn two lessons, first, that however important I may be in my own eyes, I am very insignificant in his, and secondly, that I am never likely to receive any acknowledgment of the favour I have conferred upon his lordship, either under his own hand, or by the means of a third person, and consequently that our intercourse has ceased for ever, for I shall not have such another opportunity to renew it. To make me amends however for this mortification, Mr Newton tells me, that my book is likely to run, spread, and prosper, that the grave cannot help smiling, and the gay are struck with the truth of it, and that it is likely to find its way into his Majesty's hands, being put into a proper course for that purpose. Now if the King should fall in love with my Muse, and with you for her sake, such an event would make us ample amends for the Chancellor's indifference, and you might be the first divine that ever reached a mitre from the shoulders of a poet. But, I believe, we must be content, I with my gains, if I gain any thing, and you with the pleasure of knowing that I am a gainer.

\ Doubt not your abilities for the task which Johnson would recommend to you. The Reviewers are such fiery Socinians that they have less charity for a man of my avowed principles than a Portuguese for a Jew. They may possibly find here and there somewhat to commend, but will undoubtedly reprobate the doctrines, pronounce me a methodist, and by so doing probably check the sale of the volume, if not suppress it. Wherein consists your difficulty? Your private judgment once made public, and the world made acquainted with what you think and what you feel while you read me by the fireside, the business is done, I am reviewed,

and my book forwarded in its progress by a judicious recommendation. In return, write a book, and I will be your reviewer; thus we may hold up each other to public admiration, and turn our friendship to good account. But seriously, I think you perfectly qualified for the undertaking, and if you have no other objection to it than what arises from self-distrust, am persuaded you need only make the experiment in order to confute yourself.)

We laughed heartily at your reply to little John's question, and yet I think you might have given him a direct answer—"There are various sorts of cleverness, my dear, I do not know that mine lies in the poetical way, but I can do ten times more towards the entertainment of company in the way of conversation than our friend at Olney. He can rhyme, and I can rattle. If he had my talent, and I had his, we should be too charming, and the world would almost adore us."

I have sowed sallad, in hopes that you will eat it, I have already cut cucumbers, but have no fruit growing at present. Spring onions in abundance. We shall be happy to see you, and hope that nothing will intervene to shorten your stay with us. Our love is with you both, and with all your family. *Bon voyage!* Yours, WM COWPER

If your short stay in town will afford you an opportunity, I should be glad if you would buy me a genteelish toothpick case. I shall not think half a guinea too much for it, only it must be one that will not easily break. If second-hand, perhaps, it may be the better.

CCXX.

**MILITARY MUSIC—LATIN LANGUAGE—
PARENTHESES.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN, AT THE REV. MALIHU W

POWLEY'S, DEWSBURY, NEAR WAKEFIELD

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

April 27, 1782

A PART of Lord Harrington's new-raised corps have taken up their quarters at Olney since you left us. They have the regimental music with them. The men have been

drawn up this morning upon the Market-hill, and a concert, such as we have not heard these many years, has been performed at no great distance from our window. Your mother and I both thrust our heads into the coldest east wind that ever blew in April, that we might hear them to greater advantage. The band acquitted themselves with taste and propriety, not *blaring*, like trumpeters at a fair, but producing gentle and elegant symphony, such as charmed our ears, and convinced us that no length of time can wear out a taste for harmony ; and that though plays, balls, and masquerades have lost all their power to please us, and we should find them not only insipid but in-supportable, yet sweet music is sure to find a corresponding faculty in the soul, a sensibility that lives to the last, which even religion itself does not extinguish. I must pity therefore some good people, (at least some who once were thought such,) who have been fiddled out of all their Christian profession, and having forsaken the world for a time, have danced into it again with all their might. It is a snare from which I myself should find it difficult to escape, were I much in the way of it.

When we objected to your coming for a single night, it was only in the way of argument, and in hopes to prevail with you to contrive a longer abode with us. But rather than not see you at all, we should be glad of you though but for an hour. If the paths would be clean enough, and we are able to walk, (for you know we cannot ride,) we will endeavour to meet you in Weston Park. But I mention no particular hour, that I may not lay you under a supposed obligation to be punctual, which might be difficult at the end of so long a journey. Only if the weather be favourable, you shall find us there in the evening. It is winter in the south, perhaps therefore it may be spring at least, if not summer, in the north for I have read that it is warmest in Greenland when it is coldest here. Be that as it may, we may hope at the latter end of such an April that the first change of wind will improve the season.

We truly sympathized with you in the distresses you found on the northern side of Wakefield. It is well that the fatigue and the fright together were not too much for

Mrs. Unwin. What a boor was he you mention ! Cursed is he, says the Scripture, that turneth the blind out of his way, . . a curse that, for aught I know, is fierce enough to singe the beard at least of the wretch who refuses to turn the wanderer into it. You will probably preach at Dewsbury the last Sunday, and if you see this dealer in light money, and this uncivilized savage in the congregation, perhaps you may contrive to tell him so.

The curate's simile Latinized :—

*Sors adversa perit stimulum, sed tendit et alas ;
Pungit, api simile, sed, velut ista, fugit*

What a dignity there is in the Roman language ! and what an idea it gives us of the good sense and masculine mind of the people that spoke it ! The same thought which clothed in English seems childish, and even foolish, assumes a different air in Latin, and makes at least as good an epigram as some of Martial's.

I remember your making an observation, while here, on the subject of parentheses, to which I acceded without limitation, but a little attention will convince us both, that they are not to be universally condemned. When they abound, and when they are long, they both embarrass the sense, and are a proof that the writer's head is cloudy, that he has not properly arranged his matter, or is not well skilled in the graces of expression. But as parenthesis is ranked by grammarians among the figures of rhetoric, we may suppose they had a reason for conferring that honour upon it. Accordingly we shall find that in the use of some of our finest writers, as well as in the hands of the ancient poets and orators, it has a peculiar elegance, and imparts a beauty which the period would want without it.

*"Hoc nemus, hunc," inquit, "frondoso vertice collem
(Quis deus incertum est) habitat deus"—VIR. ÆN. 8.*

In this instance, the first that occurred, it is graceful. I have not time to seek for more, nor room to insert them. But your own observation I believe will confirm my opinion. We have thought of you and talked of you every day since you went, and shall till you return. Our love attends yourself and Mrs. Unwin, John the hider of a tea-kettle not yet found, and your hosts at Dewsbury.

Yours ever,

W. C.

CCXXI.

INCLOSING A COPY OF DR. FRANKLIN'S LETTER
UPON HIS POEMS—PROVIDENCE.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 27, 1782.

RATHER ashamed of having been at all dejected by the censure of the Critical Reviewers, who certainly could not read without prejudice a book replete with opinions and doctrines to which they cannot subscribe, I have at present no little occasion to keep a strict guard upon my vanity, lest it should be too much flattered by the following eulogium I send it for you the reasons I gave when I imparted to you some other anecdotes of a similar kind, while we were together. Our interests in the success of this same volume are so closely united, that you *must* share with me in the praise or blame that attends it, and sympathizing with me under the burthen of injurious treatment, have a right to enjoy with me the cordials I now and then receive, as I happen to meet with more favourable and candid judges.

A merchant, a friend of ours, (you will soon guess him,) sent my Poems to one of the first philosophers, one of the most eminent literary characters, as well as one of the most important in the political world, that the present age can boast of. Now perhaps your conjecturing faculties are puzzled, and you begin to ask, "who, where, and what is he?" speak out, for I am all impatience." I will not say a word more, the letter in which he returned his thanks for the present shall speak for him

SIR,

Pas-y, May 8, 1782.

I received the letter you did me the honour of writing to me, and am much obliged by your kind present of a book. The relish for reading of poetry had long since left me, but there is something so new in the manner, so easy, and yet so correct in the language, so clear in the expression, yet concise, and so just in the sentiments, that I have read the whole with great pleasure, and some of the pieces more than once. I beg you to accept my thankful acknowledgments, and to present my respects to the author

I shall take care to forward the letters to America, and

shall be glad of any other opportunity of doing what may be agreeable to you, being with great respect for your character.

Your most obedient humble servant, B. FRANKLIN.

We may now treat the critics as the Archbishop of Toledo treated Gil Blas, when he found fault with one of his sermons. His grace gave him a kick, and said, "Begone for a jackanapes, and furnish yourself with a better taste, if you know where to find it."

We are glad that you are safe at home again. Could we see at one glance of the eye what is passing every day upon all the roads in the kingdom, how many are terrified and hurt, how many plundered and abused, we should indeed find reason enough to be thankful for journeys performed in safety, and for deliverance from dangers we are not perhaps even permitted to see. When in some of the high southern latitudes, and in a dark tempestuous night, a flash of lightning discovered to Captain Cook a vessel, which glanced along close by his side, and which, but for the lightning, he must have run foul of, both the danger, and the transient light that showed it, were undoubtedly designed to convey to him this wholesome instruction, that a particular Providence attended him, and that he was not only preserved from evils, of which he had notice, but from many more of which he had no information, or even the least suspicion. What unlikely contingencies may nevertheless take place! How improbable that two ships should dash against each other, in the midst of the vast Pacific Ocean, and that steering contrary courses, from parts of the world so immensely distant from each other, they should yet move so exactly in a line as to clash, fill, and go to the bottom, in a sea where all the ships in the world might be so dispersed as that none should see another! Yet this must have happened but for the remarkable interference which he has recorded. The same Providence indeed might as easily have conducted them so wide of each other, that they should never have met at all, but then this lesson would have been lost, at least, the heroic voyager would have encompassed the globe without having had occasion to relate an incident that so naturally suggests it.

I am no more delighted with the season than you are. The absence of the sun, which has graced the spring with much less of his presence than he vouchsafed to the winter, has a very uncomfortable effect upon my frame. I feel an invincible aversion to employment, which I am yet constrained to fly to as my only remedy against something worse. If I do nothing, I am dejected, if I do any thing, I am weary, and that weariness is best described by the word lassitude, which is of all weariness in the world the most oppressive. But enough of myself and the weather.

The blow we have struck in the West Indies will, I suppose, be decisive at least for the present year, and so far as that part of our possessions is concerned in the present conflict. But the news-writers, and their correspondents, disgust me, and make me sick. One victory after such a long series of adverse occurrences has filled them with self-conceit, and impertinent boasting, and while Rodney is almost accounted a methodist for ascribing his success to Providence, men who have renounced all dependence upon such a friend, without whose assistance nothing can be done, threaten to drive the French out of the sea, laugh at the Spaniards, sneer at the Dutch, and are to carry the world before them. Our enemies are apt to brag, and we deride them for it, but we can sing as loud as they can, in the same key, and no doubt wherever our papers go, shall be derided in our turn. An Englishman's true glory should be, to do his business well, and say little about it, but he disgraces himself when he puffs his prowess as if he had finished his task, when he has but just begun it.

Yours, W. C.

CCXXII

**SELF OBSERVATION ON BECOMING AN AUTHOR—
EXPECTATION OF THE MONTHLY REVIEW—
MADAN.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 12, 1782.

EVERY extraordinary occurrence in our lives affords us an opportunity to learn, if we will, something more of our

own hearts and tempers than we were before aware of. It is easy to promise ourselves beforehand, that our conduct shall be wise, or moderate, or resolute, on any given occasion. But when that occasion occurs, we do not always find it easy to make good the promise, such a difference there is between theory and practice. Perhaps this is no new remark, but it is not a whit the worse for being old, if it be true.

Before I had published, I said to myself—You and I, Mr Cowper, will not concern ourselves much about what the critics may say of our book. But having once sent my wits for a venture, I soon became anxious about the issue, and found that I could not be satisfied with a warm place in my own good graces, unless my friends were pleased with me as much as I pleased myself. Meeting with their approbation, I began to feel the workings of ambition. It is well, said I, that my friends are pleased, but friends are sometimes partial, and mine, I have reason to think, are not altogether free from bias. methinks I should like to hear a stranger or two speak well of me. I was presently gratified by the approbation of the London Magazine, and the Gentleman's, particularly by that of the former, and by the plaudit of Dr Franklin. By the way, magazines are publications we have but little respect for, till we ourselves are chronicled in them, and then they assume an importance in our esteem which before we could not allow them. But the Monthly Review, the most formidable of all my judges, is still behind. What will that critical Radamanthus say, when my shivering genius shall appear before him? Still he keeps me in hot water, and I must wait another month for his award. Alas! when I wish for a favourable sentence from that quarter, (to confess a weakness that I should not confess to all,) I feel myself not a little influenced by a tender regard to my reputation here, even among my neighbours at Olney. Here are watch-makers, who themselves are wits, and who at present perhaps think me one. Here is a carpenter, and a baker, and not to mention others, here is your idol Mr Teedon, whose smile is fame. All these read the Monthly Review, and all these will set me down for a dunce, if those terrible

critics show them the example. But oh ! wherever else I am accounted dull, dear Mr. Griffith, let me pass for a genius at Olney !

I am glad that Mr. Madan is pleased, and obliged to him for his intercession with Dodsley 'its more than I expected. I wish he would publish something that I could approve of in return, but if he does it must be on some other subject. Had he given an answer, though but a specious one, to the criticisms of the Monthly Review, his perseverance would stand less in need of an excuse : but having hitherto left unnoticed objections that strike at the very root of his project, though most provokingly challenged to refute them if he can, and still persisting in his design, he deserves less to be pitied as a man deceived, than blamed as an obstinate one. What is that quotation from Josephus, or how can it be applied to his purpose ? Does it prove that the *converted* Jews were polygamists ? No such matter, it has therefore nothing to do with his argument. As little, in my mind, is he assisted by the remark he makes on the 19th of Matthew, "Christ did not condemn, therefore is he approved." to which I reply, *non valet consequentia* ten thousand enormities prevailed in his day, which he did not condemn by name, but he did not therefore authorize the least of them. And is it not a strange supposition that He should leave his disciples ignorant of what Mr. Madan accounts so great a privilege for eighteen centuries, and at last raise up the gentleman in question to restore it, and him so little qualified after all for the purpose, that he cannot support his doctrine ? The Spirit was promised, and the Spirit in due time was given, to lead his disciples into all truth : and the history of the Christian Church proves from the beginning to the present hour, that amongst other truths He has constantly taught them this : that it is unseemly for the followers of so holy a Master to allow themselves more wives than one, a custom for which nothing but the gratification of appetite can be honestly and fairly pleaded. The question is not "Was polygamy lawful to a Jew ?" which nobody will dispute, but "is it lawful to a Christian ?" Till he can prove the affirmative, towards which he has yet done nothing, he has better be quiet. He only

disturbs the peace of families, puts the most valuable part of the sex to the torture, and disgraces himself

We are sorry for little William's illness It is however the privilege of infancy to recover almost immediately what it has lost by sickness. We are sorry too for Mr Thornton's dangerous condition But he that is well prepared for the great journey cannot enter on it too soon for himself, though his friends will weep at his departure

Your sister is well, and joins with me and your mother in affectionate remembrance of all at Stock

We send you a cheese,
In hopes it will please
If so, your mother
Will send you another.

Yours,

W C

CCXXIII.

LINES FROM THE SNUFF-BOX PUT TO BAD USES.

TO THE REV WILLIAM BULL

MY DEAR SIR,

Wednesday, June, 1782

I AM glad you have read the plan three times with great pleasure, it is a sign that you have pretty well overcome your fears about the execution of it, for fear hath torment, and is therefore incompatible with pleasure

I would willingly send you the lines that proceed from the lips of my snuff-box, were it possible, but alas! they are no longer in being. I am a severer critic upon myself than you would imagine, and have the singular knack of being out of humour with every thing, or almost every thing I write, when it is about nine days old, accordingly I have used them,—no matter how—but Bentley himself could not have treated them with more indignity

I thank you for your kind remembrance of me, and wish always to live in your esteem and affection, I shall do so, no doubt, till you discover, as you will, that I have no right to either

I would send Mr ——'s lines, but the letter is lost in a large bundle of others from the same hand, and I have not

time to seek it. Whether it be what I approve myself or not, or whatever it be, I promise you a copy of what I write next ; and am in the mean time, with Mrs. Unwin's and Mrs Powley's best respects, Yours, WM. C

CCXXIV.

**MR. POWLEY'S DEPARTURE—MR. M. LADY AUSTEN
WESTMINSTER GRAMMAR—COLD SUMMER,**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July, 3rd, 1782.

WE took leave of your sister at the George at Northampton on Wednesday evening last, having accompanied her thither in a chaise, with which we meant to have treated her, but found on our return that, in spite of all our precaution, she had contrived to discharge it. The Leeds coach took her up the next morning,—I may properly say took her up, for it did not take her in ;—being full, it afforded her no place but on the roof. There, however, she found a well behaved man, who promised to take care of her. This intelligence has been communicated to us in a note from our late servant, who lives at Northampton, and who slept with her at the inn. We hope that by this time she is safe and sound at Dewsbury, it being agreed by all who ever made the experiment, that the top of a coach is the safest situation about it, being farthest removed from the point of joltation, as a philosopher would say, and consequently the least affected by it.

I neither congratulate nor condole with you on account of your late acquisition of Mr. M——'s acquaintance. You have no great cause to be proud of it, his smiles are not so valuable now as they might have been thought before he commenced an author. In that character he has lost the most desirable connexions he had, and would have reason to think himself too happy if he could prevail with you to fill one of the vacant niches. He did not always court you as he does now, not because you were not always worthy of his attention, but because he was not always equally sensible of your value. The advantage, could he win you,

would be all on his side ; for which reason, I esteem it, as I said, no proper subject for congratulation , but then again, in consideration of your security, and because, although he angles for you very skilfully, you will not bite, I do not account it an occasion of any anxiety or concern You are chiefly to be pitied for the disagreeable sensations to which a conduct such as you will find it necessary to observe must unavoidably expose you. It is painful to a generous mind, when solicited and assailed with expressions of a warm affection, to be obliged to make an inadequate return, and to strain hard for a little show of civility, when cordiality seems to be called for I can feel for you, because I know what I should feel in the same situation, and shall be glad to hear that you are handsomely rid of a business in which, though your prudence will guard you from being a loser, you have nothing to gain I loved him once, but now I can only be sorry for him Why will he kick against the thorns, and provoke a man so much his superior, (if I have any judgment in the subject,) both as a writer and a scholar, and especially as possessed of that ground of truth, virtue, good sense, and propriety, from which he cannot possibly be dislodged ? Ignorance and impudence !—Oh fie ! the man is indisputably learned, and writes like a gentleman

I enclose a letter from Lady Austen, which I beg you to return to me in your next. Her sister was the bearer of it. We are reconciled She seized the first opportunity to embrace your mother with tears of the tenderest affection, and I of course am satisfied We were all a little awkward at first, but now are as easy as ever. She stays at Clifton till after Christmas. Having been obliged to communicate our disagreement, I give myself a release from that obligation of secrecy, under which I am engaged with respect to her other letters, accounting this, indeed, no part of our correspondence.

I ask pardon for neglecting a subject on which you consulted me in your last. It is too much my practice to reply to a letter without reading it at the time, and on this occasion my memory failed me. I am no friend to Laly's Grammar, though I was indebted to him for my first introduction to the Latin language. The grammars used at Westminster,

both for the Latin and the Greek, are those to which, if I had a young man to educate, I should give the preference. They have the merit of being compendious and perspicuous, in both which properties I judge Lily to be defective. If I am not mistaken, however, they are in use at the Charterhouse, so that I have no need to describe them to you. They are called Busby's Grammars, though Busby did not compose them. The compilation was a task imposed upon his uppermost boys, the plan only being drawn by the master, and the versification, which I have often admired for the ingenuity of it, being theirs. I never knew a boy of any abilities who had taken his notion of language from those grammars, that was not accurate to a degree that distinguished him from most others.

I am writing in the greenhouse for retirement sake, where I shiver with cold on this present third of July. Summer and winter therefore do not depend on the position of the sun with respect to the earth, but on His appointment who is sovereign in all things. Last Saturday night the cold was so severe, that it pinched off many of the young shoots of our peach-trees. The nurseryman we deal with informs me that the wall-trees are almost everywhere cut off, and that a friend of his near London has lost all the full-grown fruit-trees of an extensive garden. The very walnuts, which are now no bigger than small hazelnuts, drop to the ground, and the flowers, though they blow, seem to have lost their odours. I walked with your mother yesterday in the garden, wrapped up in a winter surtout, and found myself not at all encumbered by it, not more, indeed, than I was in January. Cucumbers contract that spot which is seldom found upon them except late in the autumn, and melons hardly grow. It is a comfort, however, to reflect that if we cannot have these fruits in perfection, neither do we want them. Our crops of wheat are said to be very indifferent, the stalks of an unequal height, so that some of the ears are in danger of being smothered by the rest, and the ears in general lean and scanty. I never knew a summer in which we had not now and then a cold day to conflict with, but such a wintry fortnight as the last, at this season of the year, I never remember. I

fear you have made a discovery of the webs you mentioned a day too late. The vermin have probably by this time left them, and may laugh at all human attempts to destroy them, for every web they have hung upon the trees and bushes this year, you will probably next year find fifty, perhaps a hundred. Their increase is almost infinite, so that if Providence does not interfere, and man sees fit to neglect them, the laughers you mention may live to be sensible of their mistake. Love to all.

Yours, WM COWPER

CCXXV

**REFLECTIONS ON POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND
THE DISPENSATIONS OF PROVIDENCE—INCIVILITY—CONSOLATION—LADY AUSTEN—
MARTIN MADAN.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

* MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 16, 1782

THOUGH some people pretend to be clever in the way of prophetic forecast, and to have a peculiar talent of sagacity, by which they can divine the meaning of a providential dispensation while its consequences are yet in embryo, I do not. There is at this time to be found I suppose in the cabinet, and in both houses, a greater assemblage of able men, both as speakers and counsellors, than ever were contemporary in the same land. A man not accustomed to trace the workings of Providence, as recorded in Scripture, and that has given no attention to this particular subject, while employed in the study of profane history, would assert boldly that it is a token for good, that much may be expected from them, and that the country, though heavily afflicted, is not yet to be despaired of, distinguished as she is by so many characters of the highest class. Thus he would say, and I do not deny that the event might justify his skill in prognostics. God works by means, and in a case of great national perplexity and distress, wisdom and political ability seem to be the only natural means of deliverance. But a mind more religiously inclined, and perhaps a little tinctured

ed with melancholy, might with equal probability of success, hazard a conjecture directly opposite. Alas! what is the wisdom of man, especially when he trusts in it as the only God of his confidence? When I consider the general contempt that is poured upon all things sacred, the profusion, the dissipation, the knavish cunning of some, the rapacity of others, and the impenitence of all, I am rather inclined to fear that God, who honours himself by bringing human glory to shame, and by disappointing the expectations of those whose trust is in creatures, has signalized the present day as a day of much human sufficiency and strength, has brought together from all quarters of the land the most illustrious men to be found in it, only that he may prove the vanity of idols, and that when a great empire is falling, and he has pronounced a sentence of ruin against it, the inhabitants, be they weak or strong, wise or foolish, must fall with it. I am the rather confirmed in this persuasion, by observing that these luminaries of the state had no sooner fixed themselves in the political heaven, than the fall of the brightest of them shook all the rest. The arch of their power was no sooner struck than the key stone slipped out of its place, those that were closest in connexion with it followed, and the whole building, new as it is, seems to be already a ruin. If a man should hold this language, who could convict him of absurdity? The Marquis of Rockingham is minister, all the world rejoices, anticipating success in war, and a glorious peace. The Marquis of Rockingham is dead, all the world is afflicted, and relapses into its former despondence. What does this prove, but that the Marquis was their Almighty, and that now he is gone, they know no other? But let us wait a little, they will find another, perhaps the Duke of Portland, or perhaps the unpopular Shelburne, whom they now represent as a devil, may obtain that honour. Thus God is forgot, and when he is, his judgments are generally his remembrancers.

How shall I comfort you upon the subject, of your present distress? Pardon me that I find myself obliged to smile at it, because who but yourself would be distressed upon such an occasion? You have behaved politely, and

like a gentleman, you have hospitably offered your house to a stranger, who could not, in your neighbourhood at least, have been comfortably accommodated any where else. He by neither refusing nor accepting an offer that did him too much honour, has disgraced himself, but not you. I think for the future you must be more cautious of laying yourself open to a stranger, and never again expose yourself to incivilities from an archdeacon you are not acquainted with.

Though I did not mention it, I felt with you what you suffered by the loss of Miss Ord. I was only silent because I could minister no consolation to you on such a subject, but what I knew your mind to be already stored with. Indeed, the application of comfort in such cases is a nice business, and perhaps when best managed might as well be let alone. I remember reading many years ago a long treatise on the subject of consolation, written in French, the author's name I forget, but I wrote these words in the margin — "Special consolation ! at least for a Frenchman, who is a creature the most easily comforted of any in the world."

We are as happy in Lady Austen, and she in us, as ever, — having a lively imagination, and being passionately desirous of consolidating all into one family, (for she has taken her leave of London,) she has just sprung a project which serves at least to amuse us, and to make us laugh, it is, to hire Mr. Small's house, on the top of Clifton-hill, which is large, commodious, and handsome, will hold us conveniently, and any friends who may occasionally favour us with a visit. The house is furnished, but, if it can be hired without the furniture will let for a trifle. Your sentiments, if you please, upon this *dénarche* !

The word *perhaps* in that passage of your letter, which relates to your correspondence with Mr. Madan pleased me much. You say, *perhaps you may not write at all*, precisely the very conduct I would recommend to you. I have not seen his letters, but I have heard a character of them, and I dare say a just one. To disapprove them will be offensive, and not to mention them will be to disapprove them. How then can you avoid giving offence,

unless you escape by *an archdeaconism*, and decline answering him at all. Indeed, indeed, in his present sentiments, however polite, entertaining, and sensible he may be, he is not a proper connexion for you. Your character is unblemished ; permit me to say, keep it so,—and have nothing to do with Thelyphthora or its author

I send you my last frank. Our best love attends you individually and all together. I give you joy of a happy change in the season, and myself also. I have filled four sides in less time than two would have cost me a week ago, such is the effect of sunshine upon such a butterfly as I am,

Yours,

W C

CCXXVI

THANKING HIM FOR FISH, AND WISHING TO HEAR FROM HIM NOT UPON BUSINESS.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 27, 1782

I AM to thank you, though in great haste, for a very fine turbot and lobster its companion. Are you not going into the country ? Shall I not hear from you when you are a little at leisure ? I do not forget that you write innumerable letters upon business, but methinks a letter now and then not upon business should for that very reason be a refreshment to you. How fares the nation ? You think I differ from you in politics. In truth I do not, I am ready at a moment's warning to adopt yours, and renounce my own. The nook I live in affords me no means of making up a set of opinions on any such subject so well founded as not to be departed from.—My respects attend Mrs Hill

Your affectionate, WM COWPER

CCXXVII

**DR. JOHNSON—THE CAT AND THE VIPER—LADY
AUSTEN—MADAME GUYON'S POEMS RECOM-
MENDED TO HIM BY MR BULL.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug 3. 1782.

ENTERTAINING some hope that Mr Newton's next letter would furnish me with the means of satisfying your inquiry on the subject of Dr Johnson's opinion, I have till now delayed my answer to your last, but the information is not yet come, Mr Newton having intermitted a week more than usual since his last writing. When I receive it, favourable or not, it shall be communicated to you, but I am not very sanguine in my expectations from that quarter. Very learned and very critical heads are hard to please. He may perhaps treat me with lenity for the sake of my subject and design, but the composition I think will hardly escape his censure. Though all doctors may not be of the same mind, there is one doctor at least, whom I have lately discovered, my professed admirer. He too, like Johnson, was with difficulty persuaded to read, having an aversion to all poetry, except the Night Thoughts, which on a certain occasion, when being confined on board a ship he had no other employment, he got by heart. He was however prevailed upon, and read me several times over, so that if my volume had sailed with him, instead of Dr Young's I might perhaps have occupied that shelf in his memory which he then allotted to the Doctor, his name is Renny, and he lives at Newport Pagnel.

It is a sort of paradox, but it is true: we are never more in danger than when we think ourselves most secure, nor in reality more secure than when we seem to be most in danger. Both sides of this apparent contradiction were lately verified in my experience.—Passing from the greenhouse to the barn, I saw three kittens (for we have so many in our retinue) looking with fixed attention at something, which lay on the threshold of a door, coiled up. I took but little notice of them at first, but a loud hiss engaged me to attend more closely, when behold—a viper! the

largest I remember to have seen, rearing itself, darting its forked tongue, and ejaculating the aforementioned hiss at the nose of a kitten almost in contact with his lips. I ran into the hall for a hoe with a long handle, with which I intended to assail him, and returning in a few seconds missed him : he was gone, and I feared had escaped me. Still however the kitten sat watching immoveably upon the same spot. I concluded, therefore, that, sliding between the door and the threshold, he had found his way out of the garden into the yard. I went round immediately, and there found him in close conversation with the old cat, whose curiosity being excited by so novel an appearance, inclined her to pat his head repeatedly with her fore foot, with her claws however sheathed, and not in anger, but in the way of philosophical inquiry and examination. To prevent her falling a victim to so laudable an exercise of her talents, I interposed in a moment with the hoe, and performed upon him an act of decapitation, which though not immediately mortal proved so in the end. Had he slid into the passages, where it is dark, or had he, when in the yard, met with no interruption from the cat, and secreted himself in any of the out-houses, it is hardly possible but that some of the family must have been bitten, he might have been trodden upon without being perceived, and have slipped away before the sufferer could have well distinguished what foe had wounded him. Three years ago we discovered one in the same place, which the barber slew with a trowel.

Our proposed removal to Mr Small's was, as you suppose, a jest, or rather a joco-serious matter. We never looked upon it as entirely feasible, yet we saw in it something so like practicability, that we did not esteem it altogether unworthy of our attention. It was one of those projects which people of lively imaginations play with, and admire for a few days, and then break in pieces. Lady Austen returned on Thursday from London, where she spent the last fortnight, and whither she was called by an unexpected opportunity to dispose of the remainder of her lease. She has now therefore no longer any connexion with the great city, she has none on earth whom she calls friends but us, and no house

but at Olney Her abode is to be at the vicarage, where she has hired as much room as she wants, which she will embellish with her own furniture, and which she will occupy as soon as the minister's wife has produced another child, which is expected to make its entry in October

Mr Bull, a dissenting minister of Newport, a learned, ingenious, good-natured, pious friend of ours, who sometimes visits us, and whom we visited last week, has put into my hands three volumes of French poetry, composed by Madam Guyon ;—a quietist say you, and a fanatic, I will have nothing to do with her ——It is very well, you are welcome to have nothing to do with her, but in the mean time her verse is the only French verse I ever read that I found agreeable, there is a neatness in it equal to that which we applaud with so much reason in the compositions of Prior I have translated several of them, and shall proceed in my translations till I have filled a Lilliputian paper-book I happen to have by me, which when filled I shall present to Mr. Bull. He is her passionate admirer, rode twenty miles to see her picture in the house of a stranger, which stranger politely insisted on his acceptance of it, and it now hangs over his parlour chimney. It is a striking portrait, too characteristic not to be a strong resemblance, and were it encompassed with a glory, instead of being dressed in a nun's hood, might pass for the face of an angel

Our meadows are covered with a winter-flood in August, the rushes with which our bottomless chairs were to have been bottomed, and much hay which was not carried, are gone down the river on a voyage to Ely, and it is even uncertain whether they will ever return *Sic transit gloria mundi* ! I am glad you have found a curate, may he answer ! Am happy in Mrs Bouverie's continued approbation, it is worth while to write for such a reader

Yours,

W C

CCXXVIII
**VERSES WRITTEN WHILE THE FLOOD
 SEPARATED THEM**

TO LADY AUSTEN

To watch the storms, and hear the sky
 Give all our almanacks the lie,
 To shake with cold, and see the plains
 In autumn drown'd with wintry rains;
 'Tis thus I spend my moments here,
 And wish myself a Dutch Mynheer,
 I then should have no need of wit,
 For lumpish Hollander unfit.
 Nor should I then repine at mud,
 Or meadows deluged with a flood,
 But in a bog live well content,
 And find it just my element,
 Should be a clod, and not a man,
 Nor wish in vain for Sister Ann,
 With charitable aid to drag
 My mind out of its proper quag;
 Should have the genius of a boor,
 And no ambition to have more.

MY DEAR SISTER,

You see my beginning I do not know but in time I may proceed even to the printing of halfpenny ballads — Excuse the coarseness of my paper, I wasted such a quantity before I could accomplish any thing legible, that I could not afford finer I intend to employ an ingenious mechanic of the town to make me a longer case, for you may observe that my lines turn up their tails like Dutch mastiffs, so difficult do I find it to make the two halves exactly coincide with each other We wait with impatience for the departure of this unseasonable flood We think of you, and talk of you, but we can do no more, till the waters shall subside I do not think our correspondence should drop because we are within a mile of each other It is but an imaginary approximation, the flood having in reality as effectually parted us as if the British Channel rolled between us

Yours, my dear sister, with Mrs Unwin's best love

Aug 12, 1782

W. C .

TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

337

CCXXIX.

MADAM GUYON.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL

MY DEAR FRIEND,

THE letter in which this to you was enclosed did not reach me till this afternoon, though dated the twenty-seventh of July, nor did it leave London till yesterday Mr Forster, who often takes the charge of Mr Newton's dispatches to me, no doubt forgot to put it into the post

I thank you for Madame Guyon, I often spend a morning in translating some select pieces, such as I think may be successfully rendered in English When time shall serve, you shall have the fruit of my labours

Mrs Unwin joins me in best respects to Mrs Bull, not forgetting the young gentleman We are as well as these turbulent elements will permit us to be, and in hopes of seeing you once more at Olney,

I remain, your affectionate,

Aug 14, 1782

WM COWPER

CCXXX.

LADY AUSTEN'S ILLNESS—HER OPINION OF
MR. UNWIN.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

THE last four days have been days of adventure, teeming with incidents in which the opposite ingredients of pain and pleasure have been plentifully mingled, and of the most interesting kind. Lady Austen's behaviour to us ever since her return to Clifton has been such as to engage our affections to her more than ever. A flood, indeed, has sometimes parted us for many days, but though it has often been impossible for us who never ride to visit *her*, as soon as the water has become fordable by an ass, she has mounted one, and visited *us* On Thursday last, in the evening, she came down with her sister to the evening lecture She had not been long seated in her pew before she was attacked by the most excruciating pains of bilious co-

lic : having much resolution, however, and being determined not to alarm her sister, the congregation, or the minister, she bore it without discovering much of what she felt even to Mrs. Jones till the service was over. It is a disorder to which she has lately been very subject. We were just sitting down to supper, when a hasty rap alarmed us. I ran to the hall window, for the hares being loose, it was impossible to open the door. The evening had been a dismal one, raining almost continually, but just at that time it held up. I entreated Mrs. Jones to go round to the gate, and, understanding by her tremulous voice that something distressful was at hand, made haste to meet her. I had no sooner reached the yard-door, and opened it, than Lady Austen appeared leaning upon Mr. Scott. She could not speak, but thrusting her other arm under mine, with much difficulty made shift to attain the great chair by the fireside in the parlour : there she suffered unutterable anguish for a considerable time, till at length, by your mother's application and assistance, being a little relieved, she contrived to climb the staircase, and after about three hour's agony was put to bed. At eleven at night we sent off a messenger to Northampton, who returned at seven the next morning, and brought a physician with him. He prescribed, and she was better. Friday night she slept tolerably, rose cheerful, and entertained us all Saturday with much agreeable conversation as usual, but her spirits being too great for her strength, the consequence was a frightful hysteric fit, which seized her just as she was going to bed. She was alone, for her sister had been obliged to go home, and thinking there was no need of such a precaution, she would have nobody else to sleep with her. The appointed signal was, that she should knock if she wanted anything. She did so, your mother hastened to the chamber, and I after her to know if I could be of any use. She had not begun to undress, so I was admitted, and soon after her disorder became quite convulsive, accompanied with most of the symptoms of the most violent fits of that sort I have ever seen. In about an hour she grew better, rested tolerably, and was in good spirits on Sunday, and last night well enough to return to Clifton upon the ass. To day we dine there.

Are you curious to know her sentiments of *you* ? The question has, no doubt, excited your curiosity if you had none before. Suppose, however, I postpone the gratification of it, and make it part of my next letter, finishing this with something more important ? No ; you must be satisfied this moment . no man that merits the good opinion of others can be indifferent to it. You shall then.

She would have known you for your mother's son the moment she saw you, had you not been announced by name. This is some praise, let me tell you, especially from her, who thinks that mother the best of women, and loves her at least as much as if she were her own. Your figure the most elegant she ever saw,—no longer complain of calfless legs, and a belly with nothing in it !—your countenance quite handsome—no longer be ashamed of a nose you have sometimes thought too long !—every motion of your limbs, your action, your attitude, bespeak the gentleman ;—added to all this, your vivacity and your good sense, together with an amiable disposition, which she is sure you possess, though she has but an hour's knowledge of you, have placed you so high in her esteem, that had you an opportunity to cultivate an interest there, you would soon be without a rival Fourteen years ago I would not have made you this relation , such a stripling as you were at that time would have been spoiled by so much praise, and through the mere hunger after more would have lost what he had acquired already , but being the father of a family, and the minister of three parishes, I am not afraid to trust you with it. I beg Mrs Unwin will add a short postscript to your next, just to inform me whether, when you perused this picture of yourself, you blushed, and how often. I had almost forgot what she desired me to insert, that she wishes as much for a Mr. Unwin here, as you can possibly for a Lady Austen at Stock

Notwithstanding the uncommon, rigour of the season, much of our wheat is carried, and in good condition. It does not appear that the murmurings of the farmers were with any reason the corn has suffered much less by mildew than was reported , and if it is at all injured, (in this part of the world at least,) it must be ascribed to their foolish im-

patience, who *would* cut it down too soon. It is so cold this 27th of August that I shake in the greenhouse where I am writing

Our united love attends you all. Your letter is gone to Dewsbury

Yours, my dear William, WM C.

CCXXXI

LADY AUSTEN—ATTEMPT AT HOUSE-BREAKING— PROFESSORS OF RELIGION—PRISONERS.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

THE modest terms in which you express yourself on the subject of Lady Austen's commendation embolden me to add my suffrage to hers, and to confirm it by assuring you that I think her just and well founded in her opinion of you. The compliment indeed glances at myself, for were you less than she accounts you, I ought not to afford you that place in my esteem which you have held so long. My own sagacity therefore and discernment are not a little concerned upon the occasion, for either you resemble the picture, or I have strangely mistaken my man, and formed an erroneous judgment of his character. With respect to your face and figure indeed, there I leave the ladies to determine, as being naturally best qualified to decide the point, but whether you are perfectly the man of sense, and the gentleman, is a question in which I am as much interested as they, and which, you being my friend, I am of course prepared to settle in your favour. The lady (whom, when you know her as well, you will love as much as we do) is, and has been during the last fortnight, a part of our family. Before she was perfectly restored to health, she returned to Clifton. Soon after she came back, Mr Jones had occasion to go to London. No sooner was he gone, than the *Chateau*, being left without a garrison, was besieged as regularly as the night came on. Villains were both heard and seen in the garden, and at the doors and windows. The kitchen window in particular was attempted,

from which they took a complete pane of glass, exactly opposite to the iron by which it was fastened, but providentially the window had been nailed to the wood-work, in order to keep it close, and that the air might be excluded, thus they were disappointed, and being discovered by the maid, withdrew. The ladies being worn out with continual watching, and repeated alarms, were at last prevailed upon to take refuge with us. Men furnished with fire arms were put into the house, and the rascals, having intelligence of this circumstance, beat a retreat. Mr. Jones returned. Mrs. Jones and Miss Green, her daughter, left us, but Lady Austen's spirits having been too much disturbed, to be able to repose in a place where she had been so much terrified, she was left behind. She remains with us till her lodgings at the vicarage can be made ready for her reception. I have now sent you what has occurred of moment in our history since my last.

I say amen, with all my heart, to your observation on religious characters. Men who profess themselves adepts in mathematical knowledge, in astronomy or jurisprudence, are generally as well qualified as they would appear. The reason may be, that they are always liable to detection, should they attempt to impose upon mankind, and therefore take care to be what they pretend. In religion alone, a profession is often slightly taken up, and slovenly carried on, because forsooth candour and charity require us to hope the best, and to judge favourably of our neighbour, and because it is easy to deceive the ignorant, who are a great majority, upon this subject. Let a man attach himself to a particular party, contend furiously for what are properly called evangelical doctrines, and enlist himself under the banner of some popular preacher, and the business is done. Behold a Christian! a Saint! a Phoenix!—In the mean time perhaps his heart, and his temper, and even his conduct, are unsanctified, possibly less exemplary than those of some avowed infidels. No matter!—he can talk,—he has the Shibboleth of the true church,—the Bible in his pocket, and a head well stored with notions. But the quiet, humble, modest, and peaceable person, who is in his practice what the other is only in his profession, who hates a noise, and therefore makes

none, who knowing the snares that are in the world, keeps himself as much out of it as he can, and never enters it, but when duty calls, and even then with fear and trembling, is the Christian that will always stand highest in the estimation of those, who bring all characters to the test of true wisdom, and judge of the tree by its fruit

You are desirous of visiting the prisoners ; you wish to administer to their necessities, and to give them instruction 'This task you will undertake, though you expect to encounter many things in the performance of it that will give you pain Now *this* I can understand,—you will not listen to the sensibilities that distress yourself, but to the distresses of others Therefore, when I meet with one of the specious praters above-mentioned, I will send him to Stock, that by your diffidence he may be taught a lesson of modesty, by your generosity, a little feeling for others, and by your general conduct, in short, to chatter less, and to do more

Yours, my dear friend,

W C

CCXXXII

MR. SMALL'S VISIT - COWPER AFRAID TO ENQUIRE ABOUT HIS FRIENDS BY LETTER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 6, 1782

YESTERDAY, and not before, I received your letter, dated 11th of June, from the hands of Mr Small. I should have been happy to have known him sooner, but whether being afraid of that horned monster, a Methodist, or whether from a principle of delicacy, or deterred by a flood, which has rolled for some weeks between Clifton and Olney, I know not,—he has favoured me only with a taste of his company, and will leave me on Saturday evening, to regret that our acquaintance, so lately begun, must be so soon suspended. He will dine with us that day, which I reckon a fortunate circumstance, as I shall have an opportunity to introduce him to the liveliest and most entertaining woman in the country I have seen him but for half an hour, yet without boasting of much discernment, I see that he is polite, easy, cheerful, and sensible. An old man thus qu

lified, cannot fail to charm the lady in question. As to his religion, I leave it—I am neither his bishop nor his confessor. A man of his character, and recommended by you, would be welcome here, were he a Gentoo, or a Mahometan.

I learn from him that certain friends of mine, whom I have been afraid to enquire about by letter, are alive and well. The current of twenty years has swept away so many, whom I once knew, that I doubted whether it might be advisable to send my love to your mother and your sisters. They may have thought my silence strange, but they have here the reason of it. Assure them of my affectionate remembrance, and that nothing would make me happier than to receive you all in my green-house, your own Mrs Hill included. It is fronted with myrtles, and lined with mats, and would just hold us, for Mr Small informs me *your* dimensions are much the same as usual.

Yours, my dear friend, WM COWPER

CCXXVIII

**EXPRESSION OF FRIENDSHIP—INVITATION TO
OLNEY—HIS OWN HOPELESS STATE.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM BULL

Mon aimable et tres cher Ami,

It is not in the power of chaises or chariots to carry you where my affections will not follow you, if I heard that you were gone to finish your days in the Moon, I should not love you the less, but should contemplate the place of your abode, as often as it appeared in the heavens, and say—Farewell, my friend, for ever! Lost, but not forgotten! Live happy in thy lantern, and smoke the remainder of thy pipes in peace! Thou art rid of Earth, at least of all its cares and so far can I rejoice in thy removal, and as to the cares that are to be found in the Moon, I am resolved to suppose them lighter than those below, heavier they can hardly be.

* I have never since I saw you failed to enquire of all the few that were likely to inform me, whether you were sick or

abroad, for I have long wondered at your long silence and your long absence. I believe it was Mr. Jones who told me that you were gone from home. I suppose, therefore, that you have been at Ramsgate, and upon that condition I excuse you, but you should have remembered, my friend, that people do not go to the seaside to bring back with them pains in the bowels and such weakness and lassitude as you complain of. You ought to have returned ten years younger, with your nerves well braced and your spirits at the top of the weather glass. Come to us, however, and Mrs. Unwin shall add her attentions and her skill to those of Mrs. Bull, and we will give you broth to heal your bowels, and toasted rhubarb to strengthen them, and send you back as brisk and as cheerful as we wish you to be always.

Both your advice and your manner of giving it are gentle and friendly, and like yourself. I thank you for them, and do not refuse your counsel because it is not good, or because I dislike it, but because it is not for me; there is not a man upon earth that might not be the better for it, myself only excepted. Prove to me that I have a right to pray, and I will pray without ceasing; yes, and praise too, even in the belly of this hell, compared with which Jonah's was a palace, a temple of the living God. But let me add, there is no encouragement in the Scripture so comprehensive as to include my case, nor any consolation so effectual as to reach it. I do not relate it to you, because you could not believe it; you would agree with me if you could. And yet the sin by which I am excluded from the privileges I once enjoyed, you would account no sin, you would even tell me that it was a duty. This is strange;—you will think me mad,—but I am not mad, most noble Festus, I am only in despair, and those powers of mind which I possess are only permitted to me for my amusement at some times, and to acuminate and enhance my misery at others. I have not even asked a blessing upon my food these ten years, nor do I expect that I shall ever ask it again. Yet I love you, and such as you, and determine to enjoy your friendship while I can—it will not be long, we must soon part for ever.

Madame Guyon is finished, but not quite transcribed

Mrs. Unwin, who has lately been much indisposed, unites her love to you with mine, and we both wish to be affectionately remembered to Mrs Bull and the young gentleman
 Yours, my friend, WM COWPER.

Oct 27, 1782.

CCXXXIV.

JOHN GILPIN—PUBLIC SUBSCRIPTIONS—SUFFERINGS—OF THE POOR AT OLNEY.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 4, 1782

You are too modest, though your last consisted of three sides only, I am certainly a letter in your debt. It is possible that this present writing may prove as short. Yet, short as it may be, it will be a letter, and make me a creditor, and you my debtor. A letter indeed ought not to be estimated by the length of it but by the contents, and how can the contents of any letter be more agreeable than your last?

You tell me that John Gilpin made you laugh tears, and that the ladies at court are delighted with my Poems. Much good may they do them! May they become as wise as the writer wishes them, and then they will be much happier than he! I know there is in the book that wisdom which cometh from above, because it was from above that I received it. May they receive it too! For whether they drink it out of the cistern, or whether it falls upon them immediately from the clouds, as it did on me, it is all one. It is the water of life, which whosoever drinketh shall thirst no more. As to the famous horseman above mentioned, he and his feats are an inexhaustible source of merriment. At least we find him so, and seldom meet without refreshing ourselves with the recollection of them. You are perfectly at liberty to deal with them as you please. *Auctore tantum anonymo imprimantur*, and when printed, send me a copy.

I congratulate you on the discharge of your duty and your conscience, by the pains you have taken for the relief of the prisoners. You proceeded wisely, yet courageously, and deserved better success. Your labours however will be

remembered elsewhere, when you shall be forgotten here, and if the poor folks at Chelmsford should never receive the benefit of them, you will yourself receive it in heaven. It is pity that men of fortune should be determined to acts of beneficence sometimes by popular whim, or prejudice, and sometimes by motives still more unworthy. The liberal subscription raised in behalf of the widows of the seamen lost in the Royal George was an instance of the former. At least a plain, short, and sensible letter in the newspaper convinced me at the time, that it was an unnecessary and injudicious collection and the difficulty you found in effectuating your benevolent intentions on this occasion, constrains me to think that had it been an affair of more notoriety than merely to furnish a few poor fellows with a little fuel to preserve their extremities from the frost, you would have succeeded better. Men really pious delight in doing good by stealth; but nothing less than an ostentatious display of bounty will satisfy mankind in general. I feel myself disposed to furnish you with an opportunity to shine in secret. We do what we can. But that *can* is little. You have rich friends, are eloquent on all occasions, and know how to be pathetic on a proper one. The winter will be severely felt at Olney by many, whose sobriety, industry, and honesty, recommend them to charitable notice and we think we could tell such persons as Mrs. Bouverie, or Mr. Smith, half a dozen tales of distress, that would find their way into hearts as feeling as theirs. You will do as you see good, and we in the mean time shall remain convinced, that you will do your best. Lady Austen will no doubt do something; for she has great sensibility and compassion.

Your mother wishes you to buy her twelve yards of silk for a gown, from five to seven shillings a yard, and half ell wide. The colour, either ruby, garnet, or *boile de Paris*.

Yours, my dear Unwin,

W C.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

347

CCXXXV.

A CORDIAL INVITATION.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

Nov. 5, 1782.

Charisme Taurorum—

Quot sunt, vel fuerunt, vel posthac alius erunt in annis

We shall rejoice to see you, and I just write to tell you so. Whatever else I want, I have, at least, this quality in common with publicans and sinners, that I love those that love me, and, for that reason, you in particular. Your warm and affectionate manner demands it of me. And though I consider your love as growing out of a mistaken expectation that you shall see me a spiritual man hereafter, I do not love you much the less for it. I only regret that I did not know you intimately in those happier days, when the frame of my heart and mind was such as might have made a connexion with me not altogether unworthy of you.

I add only Mrs. Unwin's remembrances, and that I am glad you believe me to be, what I truly am,

Your faithful and affectionate, W C

—
CCXXXVI,

CONTENTED WITH HIS SITUATION IN ALL RESPECTS

—DEPENDENCE EXCEPTED—PLANTING—

INVITATION TO OLNEY,

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ,

Nov. 11, 1782,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

YOUR shocking scrawl, as you term it, was, however, a very welcome one. The character, indeed, has not quite the neatness and beauty of an engraving, but, if it cost me some pains to decypher it, they were well rewarded by the minute information it conveyed. I am glad your health is such, that you have nothing more to complain of than may be expected on the down-hill side of life. If mine is better than yours, it is to be attributed, I suppose, principally, to the constant enjoyment of country air and retirement, the most perfect regularity in matters of eating, drinking, and sleeping; and a happy emancipation from every thing that wears the face of business. I lead the life I always wished

for, and the single circumstance of dependence excepted, (which, between ourselves, is very contrary to my predominant humour and disposition,) have no want left broad enough for another wish to stand upon.

You may not, perhaps, live to see your trees attain to the dignity of timber, —I, nevertheless, approve of your planting, and the disinterested spirit that prompts you to it. Few people plant, when they are young; a thousand other less profitable amusements divert their attention, and most people, when the date of youth is once expired, think it too late to begin. I can tell you, however, for your comfort and encouragement, that when a grove, which Major Cowper had planted, was of eighteen years growth, it was no small ornament to his grounds, and afforded as complete a shade as could be desired. Were I as old as your mother, in whose longevity I rejoice, and the more, because I consider it as, in some sort, a pledge and assurance of yours, and should come to the possession of land worth planting, I would begin to-morrow, and even without previously insisting upon a bond from Providence that I should live five years longer.

I saw last week a gentleman who was lately at Hastings. I asked him where he lodged. He replied at P——'s. I next enquired after the poor man's wife, whether alive or dead. He answered, dead. So then, said I, she was scolded her last, and a sensible old man will go down to his grave in peace. Mr P——, to be sure, is of no great consequence, either to you or to me, but having so fair an opportunity to inform myself about him, I could not neglect it. It gives me pleasure to learn somewhat of a man I knew a little of so many years since, and for that reason merely I mention the circumstance to you.

I find a single expression in your letter which needs correction. You say I carefully avoid paying you a visit at Wargrave. Not so, —but connected as I happily am, and rooted where I am, and not having travelled these twenty years, —being, besides, of an indolent temper, and having spirits that cannot bear a bustle —all these are so many insuperables in the way. They are not, however, in yours, and if you and Mrs. Hill will make the experiment, you

shall I find yourselves as welcome here both to me and to Mrs Unwin, as it is possible you can be any where.

Yours affectionately, Wm. COWPER

CCXXXVII.

**MR. SMITH'S BOUNTY TO THE POOR AT OLNEY—
JOHN GILPIN—VIVE LA BAGATELLE**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Nov. 18, 1782

ON the part of the poor, and on our part, be pleased to make acknowledgments, such as the occasion calls for, to our beneficent friend Mr Smith I call him ours, because having experienced his kindness to myself in a former instance, and in the present his disinterested readiness to succour the distressed, my ambition will be satisfied with nothing less. He may depend upon the strictest secrecy, no creature shall hear him mentioned, either now or hereafter, as the person from whom we have received this bounty. But when I speak of him, or hear him spoken of by others, which sometimes happens, I shall not forget what is due to so rare a character I wish, and your mother wishes it too, that he could sometimes take us in his way to Nottingham, he will find us happy to receive a person whom we must needs account it an honour to know. We shall exercise our best discretion in the disposal of the money, but in this town, where the Gospel has been preached so many years, where the people have been favoured so long with laborious and conscientious ministers, it is not an easy thing to find those who make no profession of religion at all, and are yet proper objects charity The profane are so profane, so drunken, dissolute, and in every respect worthless, that to make them partakers of his bounty would be to abuse it We promise, however, that none shall touch it but such as are miserably poor, yet at the same time industrious and honest, characters frequently united here, where the most watchful and unremitting labour will hardly procure them bread We make none but the cheapest laces, and the price of them is fallen almost to nothing Thanks are due to yourself likewise, and are hereby accordingly rendered,

for waving your claim in behalf of your own parishioners. You are always with them, and they are always, at least some of them, the better for your residence among them. Olney is a populous place, inhabited chiefly by the half-starved and the ragged of the earth, and it is not possible for our small party and small ability to extend their operations so far as to be much felt among such numbers. Accept therefore your share of their gratitude, and be convinced that when they pray for a blessing upon those who have relieved their wants. He that answers that prayer, and when he answers it, will remember his servant at Stock.

I little thought when I was writing the history of John Gilpin, that he would appear in print—I intended to laugh, and to make two or three others laugh, of whom you were one. But now all the world laughs, at least if they have the same relish for a tale ridiculous in itself, and quaintly told, as we have—Well—they do not always laugh so innocently, or at so small an expense—for in a world like this, abounding with subjects for satire, and with satirical wits to mark them, a laugh that hurts nobody has at least the grace of novelty to recommend it. Swift's darling motto was, *Vive la bagatelle*—a good wish for a philosopher of his complexion, the greater part of whose wisdom, whencesoever it came, most certainly came not from above. *La bagatelle* has no enemy in me, though it has neither so warm a friend nor so able a one, as it had in him. If I trifle, and merely trifle, it is because I am reduced to it by necessity—a melancholy, that nothing else so effectually disperses, engages me sometimes in the arduous task of being merry by force. And, strange as it may seem, the most ludicrous lines I ever wrote have been written in the saddest mood, and, but for that saddest mood, perhaps had never been written at all. To say truth, it would be but a shocking vagary, should the mariners on board a ship buffeted by a terrible storm, employ themselves in fiddling and dancing, yet sometimes much such a part act I.

I hear from Mrs. Newton, that some great persons have spoken with great approbation of a certain book—Who they are, and what they have said, I am to be told in a

future letter. The Monthly Reviewers in the mean time have satisfied me well enough.

Yours, my dear William, W C

CCXXXVIII.

**FISH WELCOME, BUT NO SUBSTITUTE FOR A
LETTER—MR. SMALL—ELLIOTT'S
EYE-MEDICINES.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov. 1782.

I AM to thank you for a fine cod, which came most opportunely to make a figure on our table, on an occasion that made him singularly welcome I write, and you send me a fish This is very well, but not altogether what I want I wish to hear from you, because the fish, though he serves to convince me that you have me still in remembrance, says not a word of those that sent him, and with respect to your and Mrs Hill's health, prosperity, and happiness, leaves me as much in the dark as before You are aware, likewise, that where there is an exchange of letters, it is much easier to write But I know the multiplicity of your affairs, and therefore perform my part of the correspondence as well as I can, convinced that you would not omit yours, if you could help it

Three days since I received a note from old Mr Small, which was more than civil—it was warm and friendly The good veteran excuses himself for not calling upon me, on account of the feeble state in which a fit of the gout had left him He tells me, however, that he has seen Mrs. Hill, and your improvements at Wargrave, which will soon become an ornament to the place May they¹ and may you both live long to enjoy them¹ I shall be sensibly mortified if the season and his gout together should deprive me of the pleasure of receiving him here, for he is a man much to my taste, and quite an unique in this country.

When it suits you to send me some more of Elliott's medicines, I shall be obliged to you My eyes are, in ge-

neral, better than I remember them to have been, since I first opened them upon this sublunary stage, which now a little more than half a century ago ; yet I do not think myself safe, either without those remedies, or when, through long keeping, they have, in part, lost their virtue. I seldom use them without thinking of our trip to Maidenhead, where I first experienced their efficacy. We are growing old ; but this is between ourselves. the world knows nothing of the matter. Mr. Small tells me you look much as you did and as for me, being grown rather plump, the ladies tell me I am as young as ever

Yours ever, WM COWPER

CCXXXIX.

**THANKS FOR THE INTEREST SHE TAKES IN HIS
POEMS—WINTER SETTING IN WITH SEVERITY—
THE POOR—THE WAYS OF PROVIDENCE—DIS-
PUTES BEST CARRIED ON AT A DISTANCE**

TO MRS NEWTON

MY DEAR MADAM,

Nov. 23, 1782

THE soles with which you favoured us were remarkably fine. Accept our thanks for them ; thanks likewise for the trouble you take in vending my poems, and still more for the interest you take in their success. My authorship is undoubtedly pleased when I hear that they are approved either by the great or the small ; but to be approved by the great, as Horace observed many years ago, is fame indeed. Having met with encouragement, I consequently wish to write again, but wishes are a very small part of the qualifications necessary for such a purpose. Many a man who has succeeded tolerably well in his first attempt, has spoiled all by the second. But it just occurs to me that I told you so once before, and if my memory had served me with the intelligence a minute sooner, I would not have repeated the observation now.

The winter sets in with great severity. The rigour of the season, and the advanced price of grain, are very threatening to the poor. • It is well with those that can feed upon

a promise, and wrap themselves up warm in the robe of salvation. A good fire-side and a well-spread table are but very indifferent substitutes for these better accommodations, so very indifferent, that I would gladly exchange them both, for the rags and the unsatisfied hunger of the poorest creature that looks forward with hope to a better world, and weeps tears of joy in the midst of penury and distress. What a world is this ! How mysteriously governed and, in appearance left to itself. One man, having squandered thousands at a gaming-table, finds it convenient to travel, gives his estate to somebody to manage for him, amuses himself a few years in France and Italy, returns, perhaps, wiser than he went, having acquired knowledge which, but for his follies, he would never have acquired, again makes a splendid figure at home, shines in the senate, governs his country as its minister, is admired for his abilities, and, if successful, adored, at least by a party. When he dies he is praised as a demigod, and his monument records every thing but his vices. The exact contrast of such a picture is to be found in many cottages at Olney. I have no need to describe them, you know the character, I mean. They love God, they trust him, they pray to him in secret, and though he means to reward them openly, the day of recompense is delayed. In the mean time they suffer every thing that infirmity and poverty can inflict upon them. Who would suspect, that has not a spiritual eye to discern it, that the fine gentleman was one whom his Maker had in abhorrence, and the wretch last-mentioned, dear to him as the apple of his eye ? It is no wonder that the world, who are not in the secret, find themselves obliged, some of them, to doubt Providence, and others absolutely to deny it, when almost all the real virtue there is in it, is to be found living and dying in a state of neglected obscurity, and all the vices of others cannot exclude them from the privilege of worship and honour.* But behind the curtain the matter is explained, very little, however, to the satisfaction of the great.

* If you ask me why I have written thus, and to you especially, to whom there was no need to write thus, I can

only reply, that having a letter to write, and no news to communicate, I picked up the first subject I found, and pursued it as far as was convenient for my purpose.

Mr Newton and I are of one mind on the subject of patriotism. Our dispute was no sooner begun than it ended. It would be well, perhaps, if, when two disputants begin to engage, their friends would hurry each into a separate chaise, and order them to opposite points of the compass. Let one travel twenty miles east, the other as many west, then let them write their opinions by the post. Much altercation and chafing of the spirit would be prevented, they would sooner come to a right understanding, and running away from each other, would carry on the combat more judiciously, in exact proportion to the distance.

My love to that gentleman, if you please, and tell him, that, like him though I love my country, I hate its follies, and its sins, and had rather see it scourged in mercy, than judicially hardened by prosperity.

Mrs Unwin is not very well, but better than she has been. She adds her love to both. Yours, my dear Madam,
as ever, WM COWPER

CCXI

DISTRIBUTION OF ALMS—TEEDON

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Nov 30, 1782

SINCE such is Mr Smith's desire, we will dispose of the money before the expiration of the year. It is, indeed, already disposed of, except a very small part, which it was our intention to reserve till the increasing severity of the season should call for the application of it. A man and his wife have been made so happy, that they could neither of them sleep for joy. They are perfectly honest, sober, and industrious, but with all their industry were unable to maintain themselves and five children, without running deeply in debt to the baker. The discharge of this debt

and the additional comfort of some necessary clothing, were blessings so unexpected, that the transports they felt on receiving them are not often equalled

Your friend, Mr Teedon, who with all his foibles is a deserving man, so far at least as the strictest honesty and the most laborious attention to his little school, can entitle him to that character, has been very seasonably and substantially relieved. The poor man's writing paper was almost all expended, and not having wherewithal to purchase more, or to pay his small arrears to the stationer, he had fretted himself into a slow fever, which Mr. Smith however has effectually cured, and he stands restored to his former health and sprightliness of conversation. Rent day was likewise near at hand, a formidable era, which I believe his indigence always obliges him to anticipate with horror, but the terrors of it are removed, and the sum of three guineas has performed all these wonders. Our judgment in these matters is, that it is better to give effectual relief to a few than to split a sum into diminutive items, the operation of which is scarcely perceptible among many. We have, however, delivered others from the entanglement of debts which, though small, were to them an insupportable burthen, and by putting a few shillings in their pockets, have encouraged them to undergo the drudgery of their miserable occupations with alacrity and delight. I have been rather circumstantial in my detail, because, though it is certain Mr Smith would not have entrusted his bounty to our disposal, had he not had some thing like an implicit confidence in our discretion, it will perhaps afford him satisfaction to know, with some degree of particularity, in what manner that discretion has been exercised. We have given to none but the honest, the worthy, and consequently, I may add, to none but the truly grateful.

To-morrow I shall expect a letter from Mr Newton, it is not therefore in my power to give you any information by this post on the subject, which Mrs Newton touched so lightly. Whether he himself will enlarge upon it is doubtful, being fearful, for wise reasons, of receiving praise, and for the same reasons fearful of communicating it. But as

for me, my modesty is in no danger, I have that within which sufficiently guards me against the workings of vanity, no man would think highly of himself, if he believed that his Maker thought meanly of him

I have a poem upon Friendship, which, for the life of me, I cannot now transcribe, it is at least thirty stanzas in length, each consisting of six lines. On some future occasion, perhaps, I may have more time, and find myself less indolent. At present I can write nothing but a letter, and, to say the truth, am not sorry when I have reached the end of it

I beg you will mention us handsomely to Mr. Smith and to Mr and Mrs Creuze. Your mother is pretty well, her love attends you

Yours, my dear friend,

WM COWPER

I have written this a week sooner than I need have done, a discovery I have made this moment, it is possible, therefore, that I may find an opportunity to send you Friendship

CCXI.

BEATTIE—DOUBTS WHETHER HE SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO PUBLISH A SECOND VOLUME.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

DOCTOR BEATTIE is a respectable character. I account him a man of sense, a philosopher, a scholar, a person of distinguished genius, and a good writer. I believe him too a Christian, with a profound reverence for the Scriptures, with great zeal and ability to enforce the belief of it (both which he exerts with the candour and good manners of a gentleman), he seems well entitled to that allowance, and to deny it him, would impeach one's own right to the appellation. With all these good things to recommend him, there can be no dearth of sufficient reasons to read his writings. You favoured me some years since with one of his volumes, by which I was both pleased and instructed, and I beg that you will send me the new one, when you can conveniently spare it, or rather bring it yourself, while

the swallows are yet upon the wing, for the summer is going down apace.

You tell me you have been asked, if I am intent upon another volume? I reply,—not at present, not being convinced that I have met with sufficient encouragement. I account myself happy in having pleased a few, but am not rich enough to despise the many. I do not know what sort of market my commodity has found, but if a slack one, I must beware how I make a second attempt. My bookseller will not be willing to incur a certain loss, and I can as little afford it. Notwithstanding what I have said, I write, and am even now writing for the press. I told you that I had translated several of the poems of Madame Guyon. I told you too, or I am mistaken, that Mr Bull designed to print them. That gentleman is gone to the seaside with Mrs Wilberforce, and will be absent six weeks. My intention is to surprise him at his return with the addition of as much more translation as I have already given him. This however is still less likely to be a popular work than my former. Men that have no religion would despise it, and men that have no religious experience would not understand it. But the strain of simple and unaffected piety in the original is sweet beyond expression. She sings like an angel, and for that very reason has found but few admirers. Other things I write too, as you will see on the other side, but these merely for my amusement. W. C.

CCXLII.

RECOLLECTION OF HIS FRIEND AT THE COFFEE-
HOUSE—DESCRIPTION OF HIS OWN FRIENDS
—POLITICS—ELLIOTT'S MEDICINES.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 7, 1782.

At seven o'clock this evening, being the seventh of December, I imagine I see you in your box at the coffee-house. No doubt the waiter, as ingenious and adroit as his predecessors were before him, raises the teapot to the

ceiling with his right hand, while in his left the teacup descending almost to the floor, receives a limpid stream, limpid in its descent, but no sooner has it reached its destination, than frothing and foaming to the view, it becomes a roaring syllabub. This is the nineteenth winter since I saw you in this situation, and if nineteen more pass over me before I die, I shall still remember a circumstance we have often laughed at.

How different is the complexion of your evenings and mine!—yours, spent amid the ceaseless hum that proceeds from the inside of fifty noisy and busy periwigs, mine, by a domestic fireside, in a retreat as silent as retirement can make it, where no noise is made but what we make for our own amusement. For instance here are two rustics, and your humble servant in company. One of the ladies has been playing on the harpsichord, while I, with the other, have been playing at battledore and shuttlecock. A little dog, in the mean time, howling under the chair of the former, performed, in the vocal way, to admiration. This entertainment over, I began my letter, and having nothing more important to communicate, have given you an account of it. I know you love dearly to be idle, when you can find an opportunity to be so, but as such opportunities are rare with you, I thought it possible that a short description of the idleness I enjoy might give you pleasure. The happiness we cannot call our own, we yet seem to possess, while we sympathise with our friends who can.

The papers tell me that peace is at hand, and that it is at a great distance, that the siege of Gibraltar is abandoned, and that it is to be still continued. It is happy for me, that though I love my country, I have but little curiosity. There was a time when these contradictions would have distressed me, but I have learnt by experience that it is best for little people like myself to be patient, and to wait till time affords the intelligence which no speculations of theirs can ever furnish.

I thank you for a fine cod with oysters, and hope that ere long, I shall have to thank you for procuring me Elliott's medicines. Every time I feel the least uneasiness in

TO THE REV. W. UNWIN.

359

either eye, I tremble lest, my *Æsculapius* being departed,
my infallible remedy should be lost for ever Adieu My
respects to Mrs Hill. Yours, faithfully,

WM COWPER,

CCXLII'

THE TIME PLEASANTLY SPENT EFFECT OF
MR SMITH'S BENEVOLENCE.

1783.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Jan. 19, 1783.

Not to retaliate, but for want of opportunity, I have delayed writing From a scene of the most uninterrupted retirement, we have passed at once into a state of constant engagement, not that our society is much multiplied,—the addition of an individual has made all this difference Lady Austen and we pass our days alternately at each other's *chateau*. In the morning I walk with one or other of the ladies, and in the afternoon wind thread 'Thus did Hercules, and thus probably did Samson, and thus do I, and were both those heroes living, I should not fear to challenge them to a trial of skill in that business, or doubt to beat them both As to killing lions, and other amusements of that kind, with which they were so delighted, I should be their humble servant, and beg to be excused

Having no frank, I cannot send you Mr. Smith's two letters as I intended. We corresponded as long as the occasion required, and then ceased. Charmed with his good sense, politeness, and liberality to the poor, I was indeed ambitious of continuing a correspondence with him, and told him so Perhaps I had done more prudently had I never proposed it. But warm hearts are not famous for wisdom, and mine was too warm to hearts to be very considerate on such an occasion. I have not heard from him since, and have long given up all expectation of it. I know he is too busy a man to have leisure for me, and ought to have recollected it sooner. He found time to do much good, and to employ us as his agents in doing it,* and that might

have satisfied me. Though laid under the strictest injunctions of secrecy, both by him, and by you on his behalf, I consider myself as under no obligation to conceal from you the remittances he made. Only, in my turn, I beg leave to request secrecy on your part, because, intimate as you are with him, and highly as he values you, I cannot yet be sure that the communication would please him, his delicacies on this subject being as singular as his benevolence. He sent forty pounds, twenty at a time. Olney has not had such a friend this many a day ; nor has there been an instance at any time of a few poor families so effectually relieved, or so completely encouraged to the pursuit of that honest industry by which, their debts being paid, and the parents and children comfortably clothed, they are now enabled to maintain themselves. Their labour was almost in vain before, but now it answers, it earns them bread, and all their other wants are plentifully supplied.

I wish, that by Mr Bate's assistance, your purpose on behalf of the prisoners may be effectuated. A pen so formidable as his might do much good, if properly directed. The dread of a bold censure is ten times more moving than the most eloquent persuasion. They that cannot feel for others, are the persons of all the world who feel most sensibly for themselves.

Yours, my dear friend,

W C

CCXLII 11

**A GROUPE OF OLNEY POLITICIANS - ENGLAND IN
THE AMERICAN WAR MORE SINNED AGAINST
THAN SINNING.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

JAN 26, 1783

It is reported among persons of the best intelligence at Olney—the barber, the schoolmaster, and the drummer of a corps quartered at this place, that the belligerent powers are at last reconciled, the articles of the treaty adjusted, and that peace is at the door. I saw this morning, at nine o'clock, a group of about twelve figures very closely en-

gaged in a conference, as I suppose, upon the same subject. The scene of consultation was a blacksmith's shed, very comfortably screened from the wind, and directly opposed to the morning sun. Some held their hands behind them, some had them folded across their bosom, and others had thrust them into their breeches pockets. Every man's posture bespoke a pacific turn of mind, but the distance being too great for their words to reach me, nothing transpired. I am willing, however, to hope that the secret will not be a secret long, and that you and I, equally interested in the event, though not, perhaps, equally well-informed, shall soon have an opportunity to rejoice in the completion of it. The powers of Europe have clashed with each other to a fine purpose, that the Americans, at length declared independent, may keep themselves so, if they can; and that what the parties, who have thought proper to dispute upon that point, have wrested from each other in the course of the conflict, may be, in the issue of it, restored to the proper owner. Nations may be guilty of a conduct that would render an individual infamous for ever, and yet carry their heads high, talk of their glory, and despise their neighbours. Your opinions and mine, I mean our political ones, are not exactly of a piece, yet I cannot think otherwise upon this subject than I have always done. England, more, perhaps, through the fault of her generals, than her councils, has in some instances acted with a spirit of cruel animosity she was never chargeable with till now. But this is the worst that can be said. On the other hand, the Americans, who, if they had contented themselves with a struggle for lawful liberty, would have deserved applause, seem to me to have incurred the guilt of parricide, by renouncing their parent, by making her ruin their favourite object, and by associating themselves with their worst enemy, for the accomplishment of their purpose. France, and of course Spain, have acted a treacherous, a thievish part. They have stolen America from England, and whether they are able to possess themselves of that jewel or not hereafter, it was doubtless what they intended. Holland appears to me in a meaner light than any of them. They quarrelled with a friend for an

enemy's sake. The French led them by the nose, and the English have threshed them for suffering it. My views of the contest being, and having been always such, I have consequently brighter hopes for England than her situation some time since seemed to justify. She is the only injured party. America may, perhaps, call her the aggressor, but if she were so, America has not only repelled the injury, but done a greater. As to the rest, if perfidy, treachery, avarice, and ambition, can prove their cause to have been a rotten one, those proofs are found upon them. I think, therefore, that whatever scourge may be prepared for England, on some future day, her ruin is not yet to be expected.

Acknowledge, now, that I am worthy of a place under the shed I described, and that I should make no small figure among the *quidnuncs* of Olney.

I wish the society you have formed may prosper. Your subjects will be of greater importance, and discussed with more sufficiency. The earth is a grain of sand, but the spiritual interests of man are commensurate with the heavens.

Pray remind Mr Bull, who has too much genius to have a good memory, that he has an account to settle for Mrs Unwin with her grocer, and give our love to him. Accept for yourself and Mrs Newton your just share of the same commodity, with our united thanks for a very fine barrel of oysters. This, indeed, is rather commending the barrel than its contents. I should say, therefore, for a barrel of very fine oysters.

Yours, my dear friend, as ever,

W C

CCXLV

REFLECTION ON THE PEACE.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 8, 1783.

WHEN I contemplate the nations of the earth, and their conduct towards each other, through the medium of scriptural light, my opinions of them are exactly like your own. Whether they do good or do evil, I see them acting under the permission, or direction of that Providence who

governs the earth, whose operations are as irresistible as they are silent and unsuspected. So far we are perfectly agreed, and howsoever we may differ upon inferior parts of the subject, it is, as you say, an affair of no great consequence. For instance, you think the peace a better than we deserve, and in a certain sense I agree with you as a sinful nation we deserve no peace at all, and have reason enough to be thankful that the voice of war is at any rate put to silence. But when I consider the peace as the work of our ministers, and reflect that with more wisdom or more spirit, they might perhaps have procured a better, I confess it does not please me. Such another peace would ruin us, I suppose, as effectually as a war protracted to the extremest inch of our ability to bear it. I do not think it just that the French should plunder us, and be paid for doing it, nor does it appear to me that there was an absolute necessity for such tameness on our part, as we discover in the present treaty. We give away all that is demanded, and receive nothing but what was our own before. So far as this stain upon our national honour, and this diminution of our national property, are a judgment upon our iniquities, I submit, and have no doubt but that ultimately it will be found to be judgment mixed with mercy. But so far as I see it to be the effect of French knavery and British despondency, I feel it as a disgrace, and grumble at it as a wrong. I dislike it the more, because the peacemaker has been so immoderately praised for his performance, which is, in my opinion, a contemptible one enough. Had he made the French smart for their baseness, I would have praised him too,—a minister should have shown his wisdom by securing some points, at least, for the benefit of his country. A schoolboy might have made concessions. After all, perhaps, the worst consequence of this awkward business will be dissension in the two Houses, and dissatisfaction throughout the kingdom. They that love their country, will be grieved to see her trampled upon, and they that love mischief will have a fair opportunity of making it. Were I a member of the Commons, even with the same religious sentiments as impress me now, I should think it my duty, to condemn it.

You will suppose me a politician ; but in truth I am nothing less. These are the thoughts that occur to me while I read the newspaper, and when I have laid it down, I feel myself more interested in the success of my early cucumbers, than in any part of this great and important subject. If I see them droop a little, I forget that we have been many years at war, that we have made an humiliating peace, that we are deeply in debt, and unable to pay. All these reflections are absorbed at once in the anxiety I feel for a plant, the fruit of which I cannot eat, when I have procured it. How wise, how consistent, how respectable a creature is man !

Because we have nobody to preach the gospel at Olney, Mr. Chater waits only for a barn, at present occupied by a strolling company, and the moment they quit it, he begins. He is disposed to think the dissatisfied of all denominations may possibly be united under his standard, and that the great work of forming a more extensive and more established interest than any of them, is reserved for him.*

Mrs. Unwin thanks Mrs. Newton for her kind letter, and for executing her commissions. She means to answer next week, by the opportunity of a basket of chickens. We truly love you both, think of you often, and one of us prays for you,—the other will, when he can pray for himself.

W.C.

CCXLVI.

A WARM FEBRUARY

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 13, and 20, 1783.

IN writing to you I never want a subject. Self is always at hand, and self with its concerns is always interesting to a friend.

You may think, perhaps, that having commenced poet by profession, I am always writing verses. Not so. I have written nothing, at least finished nothing, since I published, except a certain facetious history of John Gilpin, which Mr. Unwin would send to the Public Advertiser. Perhaps you might read it without suspecting the author.

My book procures me favours, which my modesty will not permit me to specify, except one which, modest as I am, I cannot suppress,—a very handsome letter from Dr. Franklin at Passy. These fruits it has brought me

I have been refreshing myself with a walk in the garden, where I find that January (who according to Chaucer was the husband of May) being dead, February has married the widow.

Yours &c.

W C

CCXLVII.

INCLOSING FRANKLIN'S LETTER.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

Olney, Feb. 20, 1783

SUSPECTING that I should not have hinted at Dr Franklin's encomium under any other influence than that of vanity, I was several times on the point of burning my letter for that very reason. But not having time to write another by the same post, and believing that you would have the grace to pardon a little self-complacency in an author on so trying an occasion, I let it pass. One sin naturally leads to another, and a greater, and thus it happens now, for I have no way to gratify your curiosity but by transcribing the letter in question. It is addressed, by the way, not to me, but to an acquaintance of mine, who had transmitted the volume to him without my knowledge.

CCXLVIII

CHANGES OF ADMINISTRATION—THURLOW

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

GREAT revolutions happen in this Ant's nest of ours. One emmet of illustrious character and great abilities pushes out another, parties are formed, they range themselves in formidable opposition, they threaten each other's ruin, they cross over and are mingled together, and like the coruscations of the Northern Aurora amuse the spectator, at the same time that by some they are supposed to be forerunners of a general dissolution.

There are political earthquakes as well as natural ones, the former less shocking to the eye, but not always less fatal in their influence than the latter. The image which Nebuchadnezzar saw in his dream was made up of heterogeneous and incompatible materials, and accordingly broken. Whatever is so formed must expect a like catastrophe.

I have an etching of the late Chancellor hanging over the parlour chimney. I often contemplate it, and call to mind the day when I was intimate with the original. It is very like him, but he is disguised by his hat, which, though fashionable, is awkward, by his great wig, the tie of which is hardly discernible in profile, and by his band and gown, which give him an appearance clumsily sacerdotal. Our friendship is dead and buried, yours is the only surviving one of all with which I was once honoured.

Adieu,

W C

CCXLIX

SYMPATHY—MUTINIOUS VOLUNTEERS—OLNEY NEWS.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 5, 1783

WHEN one has a letter to write, there is nothing more useful than to make a beginning. In the first place, because unless it be begun, there is no good reason to hope it will ever be ended, and secondly, because the beginning is half the business, it being much more difficult to put the pen in motion at first, than to continue the progress of it, when once moved.

Mrs Cunningham's illness, likely to prove mortal, and seizing her at such a time, has excited much compassion in my breast, and in Mrs Unwin's, both for her and her daughter. To have parted with a child she loves so much, intending soon to follow her, to find herself arrested before she could set out, and at so great a distance from her most valued relations, her daughter's life too threatened by disorder not often curable, are circumstances truly affecting. She has indeed much natural fortitude, and to make her condition still more tolerable, a good Christian hope for her.

support But so it is, that the distresses of those who least need our pity excite it most, the amiableness of the character engages our sympathy, and we mourn for persons for whom perhaps we might more reasonably rejoice. There is still however a possibility that she may recover; an event we *must* wish for, though for her to depart would be far better Thus we would always withhold from the skies those who alone can reach them, at least till we are ready to bear them company

Last week I had a letter from William Hadland, in very tragical terms soliciting the favour of an old coat, or money to purchase one I have returned no answer, nor do I at present intend any, partly for the reasons that influenced you to refuse it, and partly because I have heard a very different account of the offence for which he was degraded, from that which his friend East related I am informed that after the mutiny of the volunteers had been punished by confinement, they were offered their pay and a free pardon, upon condition that they would return to their duty, and that this was the critical moment which Hadland seized to raise a contribution for them, that they might still continue obstinate in their refusal, which the want of subsistence would otherwise render difficult, it not impossible. I am the rather inclined to believe this story, because his punishment, which else seems to have been unreasonable and unjust, is thus sufficiently accounted for; certainly they would not flog and degrade him for a mere act of benevolence and compassion, but when he had abetted the mutineers, he made their cause his own, and became even more guilty than the original delinquents.

I did not see Mr W——when he was at Olney, or only saw him from the window What reason he had for excepting ~~us~~ out of the number of those he visited, I know not but we are not sorry that he made the exception I wish him well, but am g^rid that he made no appeal or apology to me the many to whom he made them are not satisfied, nor did even the letter he produced serve him It professed to be a letter from his wife, but it was written by his son, and therefore had no weight.

I would always close what I write with news from Olney,

did Olney furnish any worth communicating ; but either it does not, or I have not heard it. The Lower Meeting has found a minister at last, and the people it seems are fond of him His name I think is Hillyard While he is new, he will be sure to please Mr. Scott has been ill ever since he returned from Lincolnshire , indeed, he is hardly ever well, and his distempers are of a kind that seem to make his life extremely precarious. He is better, however, within these few days

Mrs Unwin will be glad to know what she owes Mrs Newton for the items mentioned in my last We are tolerably well , but neither the season nor the wind, which is east, are favourable to our spirits . they always sink in the spring Assure yourselves that we love you, and believe me,
My dear friend, truly yours, WM. COWPER

CCL.

**ONE OF HIS PUPIL'S STYLE OF PREACHING
COMPARED WITH HIS OWN—A PENITENT.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 5, 1783

YOUR letter to Mr Scott being sent unsealed demands my thanks, as it did my perusal. You may suppose I did not hear Mr Mayor, but I heard *of him*. Mr Scott and Mr. Chator liked him, the latter especially, who spoke of him at our house in terms of the highest commendation I found however from the report of others that his sermon would have disgusted me He not only dwelt upon circumstantials, which is certainly (to use a simile from Horace) as unprofitable an employment as to pluck the hairs out of a horse's tail one by one, but expressed himself with a coarseness quite unworthy of the pulpit. Sin, he said, turns a man upside down, and grace turns a man inside out, then comes sin again, and by a dexterous jerk sets him topsy-turvy I have formerly attended the Robin Hood Society, but those orators in leathern aprons and woollen night-caps never stooped so low for their rhetorical flowers. How different is that plainness of speech which a

spiritual theme requires, from that vulgar dialect which this gentleman has mistaken for it ! Affectation of every sort is odious, especially in a minister, and more especially an affectation that betrays him into expressions fit only for the mouths of the illiterate. Truth indeed needs no ornament, neither does a beautiful person, but to clothe it therefore in rags when a decent habit was at hand, would be esteemed preposterous and absurd. The best proportioned figure may be made offensive by beggary and filth, and even truths which came down from Heaven, though they cannot forego their nature, may be disguised and disgraced by unsuitable language. It is strange that a pupil of yours should blunder thus. You may be consoled however, by reflecting, that he could not have erred so grossly, if he had not totally and wilfully departed both from your instruction and example. Were I to describe your style in two words, I should call it plain and neat, *simplicem munditius*, and I do not know how I could give it juster praise, or pay it a greater compliment. Certainly therefore the disciple in this particular at least, is not like his master. He that can speak to be understood by a congregation of rustics, and yet in terms that would not offend academical ears, has found the happy medium. This is certainly practicable to men of taste and judgment, and the practice of a few proves it. *Hactenus de concionando*

Fanny Kitchener brought Mrs Unwin a letter yesterday of her own writing. It was sensible and well expressed,—much better than the preachment above mentioned. The purport of it was to confess the impropriety of her past conduct, and to entreat Mrs Unwin's forgiveness of the offence it must have given her. She spoke with many tears and much feeling, and in the judgment of common charity is truly penitent. Mr Scott, who I believe is a surgeon that makes more use of the knife than the poultice, had told her there was but little encouragement for sinners of her complexion, but your letter to her healed all and brought her peace. She is very painfully distempered in body, and in hopes of being admitted into the Northampton hospital.

We are truly glad to hear that Miss Cunningham is better, and heartily wish you more promising accounts from

Scotland *Debemur morti nos nostraque.* We all acknowledge the debt, but are seldom pleased when those we love are required to pay it. The demand will find you prepared for it, but not me, though I have had long notice. I watched and longed for it some years, but within the last ten have learnt to fear it.

Our love attends Mrs Newton. You have both an undiminished share in it

Yours, my dear friend,

W C

CCLI.

HIS SUNDAY THOUGHTS—PALEY.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 12, 1793

A LETTER written from such a place as this is a creation, and creation is a work for which mere mortal man is very indifferently qualified. *Ex nihilo nihil fit*, is a maxim that applies itself in every case where Deity is not concerned. With this view of the matter, I should charge myself with extreme folly for pretending to work without materials, did I not know, that although nothing should be the result, even that nothing will be welcome. If I can tell you no news, I can tell you at least that I esteem you highly, that my friendship with you and yours is the only balm of my life, a comfort, sufficient to reconcile me to an existence destitute of every other. This is not the language of to-day, only the effect of a transient cloud suddenly brought over me, and suddenly to be removed, but punctually expressive of my habitual frame of mind, such as it has been these ten years.

They that have found a God, and are permitted to worship him, have found a treasure, of which, highly as they may prize it, they have but very scanty and limited conceptions. Take my word for it,—the word of a man singularly well qualified to give his evidence in this matter, who having enjoyed the privilege some years, has been deprived of it more, and has no hope that he shall live to recover it. These are my Sunday morning speculations.—the sound of the bells suggested them, or rather, gave

them such an emphasis that they forced their way into my pen, in spite of me ; for though I do not often commit them to paper, they are never absent from my mind

In the Review of last month, I met with an account of a sermon preached by Mr Paley, at the consecration of his friend, Bishop Law The critic admires and extols the preacher, and devoutly prays the Lord of the harvest to send forth more such labourers into his vineyard I rather differ from him in opinion, not being able to conjecture in what respect the vineyard will be benefited by such a measure He is certainly ingenious, and has stretched his ingenuity to the uttermost in order to exhibit the church established, consisting of bishops, priests, and deacons, in the most favourable point of view. but an unspiritual, lazy, luxurious hierarchy is too sable a subject for such washing to whiten it. I lay it down for a rule, that when much ingenuity is necessary to gain an argument credit, that argument is unsound at bottom So is his, and so are all the pretty devices by which he seeks to enforce it He says first, "that the appointment of various orders in the church is attended with this good consequence, that each class of people is supplied with a clergy of their own level and description, with whom they may live and associate on terms of equality" But in order to effect this good purpose, there ought to be at least three parsons in every parish, one for the gentry, one for the traders and mechanics, and one for the lowest of the vulgar Neither is it easy to find many parishes, where the laity at large have any society with their minister at all This therefore is fanciful, and a mere invention In the next place he says it gives a dignity to the ministry itself, and the clergy share in the respect paid to their superiors Much good may such participation do them ! They themselves know how little it amounts to The dignity, a parson derives from the lawn sleeves and square cap of his office, and will never endanger his humility

Pope says truly—

Worth makes the man, and want of it the fellow ;
The rest is but all leather or prunello,

Again—"Rich and splendid situations in the church

have been justly regarded as prizes, held out to invite persons of good hopes, and ingenuous attainments" Agreed But the prize held out in the Scripture is of a very different kind ; and our ecclesiastical baits are too often snapped by the worthless, and persons of no attainments at all They are indeed incentives to avarice and ambition, but not to those acquirements by which only the ministerial function can be adorned,—zeal for the salvation of men, humility, and self-denial

Mr Paley and I therefore cannot agree

Yours, my dear friend, W C

CCLII

DEATH OF HIS UNCLE'S WIFE—LOSS OF FRIENDS A TAX WHICH WE PAY FOR LONG LIFE.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

May 26, 1783

I FEEL for my uncle, and do not wonder that his loss afflicts him A connexion that has subsisted so many years could not be rent asunder without great pain to the survivor. I hope however and doubt not but when he has had a little more time for recollection, he will find that consolation in his own family, which it is not the lot of every father to be blessed with It seldom happens that married persons live together so long, or so happily, but this, which one feels oneself ready to suggest as matter of alleviation, is the very circumstance that aggravates his distress, therefore he misses her the more, and feels that he can but ill spare her It is however a necessary tax, which all who live long must pay for their longevity, to lose many whom they would be glad to detain, (perhaps those in whom all their happiness is centered), and to see them step into their grave before them In one respect at least this is a merciful appointment when life has lost that to which it owed its principal relish, we may ourselves the more cheerfully resign it. I beg you would present him with my most affectionate remembrance, and tell him, if you think fit, how much I wish that the evening of his long day may be serene and happy.

W C

CCLIII.
**REFUSAL OF HIS PULPITS—DEMISE OF KINGS
 —DUCHESS OF DEVONSHIRE.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 31, 1783

You have had but a disagreeable part to perform towards your two visitors, which, though disagreeable, you have performed well. I understand perfectly your reasons for not offering your pulpit to the first, but though I have no doubt of your having withheld it for reasons not less cogent, from the last, I am not equally aware of them. Whether your objections were suggested by his general course of life, or by any particular instance of misconduct, my memory which is but an indifferent one, does not furnish me with the means of knowing, neither is there any necessity that you should inform me unless it should happen that you have nothing more important to write about, for I feel myself much disposed to an implicit acquiescence in the propriety of all you do. I recollect but very imperfectly, something that passed at Doctor's Commons, where he shone indeed as he does every where, but so much in the wrong place, that serious and thinking people were rather disgusted than pleased. If, however, his ministry prospers at home, it is well, and he may find it that circumstance a consolation of which I fear our friend at Epsom cannot so readily avail himself.

We rather rejoice than mourn with you on the occasion of Mrs Cunningham's death. In the case of believers, death has lost his sting, not only with respect to those he takes away, but with respect to survivors also. Nature indeed will always suggest some causes of sorrow, when an amiable and Christian friend departs, but the Scripture, so many more, and so much more important reasons to rejoice that on such occasions, perhaps more remarkably than on any other, sorrow is turned into joy. The law of our land is affronted if we say the king dies, and insists on it that he only *demises*. This, which is a fiction, where a monarch only is in question, in the case of a Christian is reality and truth. He only lays aside a body, which it is his privilege

to be encumbered with no longer, and instead of dying, in that moment he begins to live. But thus the world does not understand, therefore the kings of it must go on *demising* to the end of the chapter, till futurity shall prove that most of them are dead indeed.

Our illustrious visitors from the continent, whatever opinion they may conceive of our *politesse*, in which perhaps they may condescend to think us inferior only to themselves, are likely to entertain but a mean one of our devotion. They will observe, at least, that the sabbath is almost as obsolete in England as in France. I feel something like indignation kindle within me, when the papers tell me that our dukes and our judges, the legislators who not long since enacted a penalty upon the profanation of that day, themselves profane it, and in a manner the most notorious. The Duchess of Devonshire has amused the world and herself almost as long as the most celebrated lady can expect to do it. They that were infants when she first started in the race of pleasure, are now beginning to engage attention, and will soon elbow that Queen of the revels out of her delightful office. Instead of a girdle there will be a rent, and instead of beauty, baldness. I once knew her Grace of Devonshire's mother well, she is a sensible and discreet woman, so that the daughter has the more to fear, and the less to plead in her excuse. Yet a little while, and she and all such will know that their life was madness — *Quicquid in buccam venerit, loquor*.

We are well, and shall rejoice to see you at any time. Be assured of our love, and believe me, my dear friend,

Ever yours, WM COWPER

CCLIV

TOBACCO—A PROMISE ACKNOWLEDGED TO SEND HIM EVERY THING HE WROTE.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 3, 1783.

My greenhouse, fronted with myrtles, and where I hear nothing but the pattering of a fine shower and the sound of distant thunder, wants only the fumes of your pipe to make

it perfectly delightful Tobacco was not known in the golden age. So much the worse for the golden age. This age of iron, or lead would be insupportable without it, and therefore we may reasonably suppose that the happiness of those better days would have been much improved by the use of it We hope that you and your son are perfectly recovered The season has been most unfavourable to animal life; and I, who am merely animal, have suffered much by it

Though I should be glad to write, I write little or nothing The time for such fruit is not yet come, but I expect it, and I wish for it I want amusement, and, deprived of that, have none to supply the place of it I send you, however, according to my promise to send you every thing, two stanzas composed at the request of Lady Austen She wanted words to a tune she much admired, and I gave her these on Peace.

Yours, W C

CCLV.

GREENHOUSE--MR BULL--MR FYTCHES CASE.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

June 8, 1783

OUR severest winter, commonly called the spring, is now over, and I find myself seated in my favourite recess, the greenhouse. In such a situation, so silent, so shady, where no human foot is heard, and where only my myrtles presume to peep in at the window, you may suppose I have no interruption to complain of, and that my thoughts are perfectly at my command But the beauties of the spot are themselves an interruption, my attention is called upon by those very myrtles, by a double row of grass pinks just beginning to blossom, and by a bed of beans already in bloom, and you are to consider it, if you please, as no small proof of my regard that though you have so many powerful rivals, I disengage myself from them all, and devote his hour entirely to you

You are not acquainted with Rev Mr Bull, of Newport, perhaps it is as well for you that you are not You would regret still more than you do, that there are so many miles

interposed between us. He spends part of the day with us to-morrow. A dissenter, but liberal one—a man of letters and of genius, master of a fine imagination, or rather not master of it,—an imagination which, when he finds himself in the company he loves, and can confide in, runs away with him into such fields of speculation, as amuse and enliven every other imagination that has the happiness to be of the party. At other times he has a tender and delicate sort of melancholy in his disposition, not less agreeable in its way. No men are better qualified for companions in such a world as this, than men of such a temperament. Every scene of life has two sides, a dark and a bright one, and the mind that has an equal mixture of melancholy and vivacity is best of all qualified for the contemplation of either; it can be lively without levity, and pensive without dejection. Such a man is Mr Bull. But—he smokes tobacco. Nothing is perfect,—

*Nihil est ab omni
Parte beatum*

I find that your friend Mr Fytche has lost his cause, and more mortifying still, has lost it by a single voice. Had I been a peer, he should have been secure of mine, for I am persuaded that if conditional presentations were in fashion, and if every minister held his benefice, as the judges their office, upon the terms of *quandiu bene se gesserit*, it would be better for the cause of religion, and more for the honour of the Establishment. There ought to be discipline somewhere, and if the Bishops will not exercise it, I do not see why lay patrons should have their hands tied. If I remember your state of the case, (and I never heard it stated but by you,) my reflections upon it are pertinent. It is, however, long since we talked about it, and I may possibly misconceive it at present if so, they go for nothing. I understand that he presented upon condition, that if the person proved immoral or negligent, he should have liberty to call upon him either for his resignation or the penalty. If I am wrong, correct me.

On the other side I send you a something, a song if you please, composed last Thursday—the incident happened the day before.

Yours, W. C.

CCLVI.

**DUTCH COMMUNICATIONS—REMARKS ON HIS
ECCLIASTICAL HISTORY—DAY OF JUDG-
MENT—REMARKABLE FOGS—THUNDER
STORM.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 13, 1783

I THANK you for your Dutch communications. The suffrage of such respectable men must have given you much pleasure, a pleasure only to be exceeded by the consciousness you had before of having published truth, and of having served a good master by doing so. Mr Madan, too, I remember had the testimony of a Dutch divine in favour of his Thelyphthora. The only inference is, that Dutch divines are not all alike, and that in Holland, as well as elsewhere, error and heresy can find advocates among those, who by their very function are called upon to root them out.

I have always regretted that your ecclesiastical history went no further. I never saw a work that I thought more likely to serve the cause of truth, nor history applied to so good a purpose. The facts incontestable, the grand observations upon them all irrefragable, and the style, in my judgment, incomparably better than that of Robertson or Gibbon. I would give you my reasons for thinking so, if I had not a very urgent one for declining it: you have no ear for such music, whoever be the performer. What you added, but never printed, is quite equal to what has appeared, which I think might have encouraged you to proceed, though you missed that freedom in writing which you found before. While you were at Olney this was at least possible in a state of retirement you had leisure, without which I suppose Paul himself could not have written his Epistles. But those days are fled, and every hope of a continuation is fled with them.

The day of Judgment is spoken of not only as a surprise, but a snare—a snare upon all the inhabitants of the earth. A difference indeed will obtain in favour of the godly, which is, that though a snare, a sudden, in some sense an unexpected, and in every sense an awful event, yet it will find *them* pre-

pared to meet it. But the day being thus characterised, a wide field is consequently open to conjecture ; some will look for it at one period, and some at another ; we shall most of us prove at last to have been mistaken, and if any should prove to have guessed aright, they will reap no advantage, the felicity of their conjecture being incapable of proof till the day itself shall prove it. My own sentiments upon the subject appear to me perfectly scriptural, though I have no doubt that they differ totally from those of all who have ever thought about it ; being however so singular, and of no importance to the happiness of mankind, and being moreover difficult to swallow, just in proportion as they are peculiar, I keep them to myself.

I am, and always have been, a great observer of natural appearances, but I think not a superstitious one. The fallibility of those speculations which lead men of fanciful minds to interpret Scripture by the contingencies of the day, is evident from this consideration, that what the God of the Scriptures has seen fit to conceal, he will not as the God of Nature publish. He is one and the same in both capacities, and consistent with himself ; and his purpose, if he designs a secret, impenetrable, in whatever way we attempt to open it. It is impossible however for an observer of natural phenomena not to be struck with the singularity of the present season. The fogs I mentioned in my last still continue, though till yesterday the earth was as dry as intense heat could make it. The sun continues to rise and set without his rays, and hardly shines at noon, even in a cloudless sky. At eleven last night the moon was a dull red, she was nearly at her highest elevation, and had the colour of heated brick. She would naturally, I know, have such an appearance looking through a misty atmosphere but that such an atmosphere should obtain for so long a time, and in a country where it has not happened in my remembrance even in the winter, is rather remarkable. We have had more thunder storms than have consisted well with the peace of the fearful maidens in Olney, though not so many as have happened in places at no great distance, nor so violent. Yesterday morning, however, at seven o'clock, two fire-balls burst either in the steeple or close to it.

William Andrews saw them meet at that point, and immediately after saw such a smoke issue from the apertures in the steeple as soon rendered it invisible. I believe no very material damage happened, though when Joe Green went afterwards to wind the clock, flakes of stone and lumps of mortar fell about his ears in such abundance, that he desisted, and fled terrified. The noise of the explosion surpassed all the noises I ever heard,—you would have thought that a thousand sledge-hammers were battering great stones to powder, all in the same instant. The weather is still as hot, and the air as full of vapour, as if there had been neither rain nor thunder all the summer.

There was once a periodical paper published, called *Mist's Journal*. a name pretty well adapted to the sheet before you. Misty however as I am, I do not mean to be mystical, but to be understood, like an almanack-maker, according to the letter. As a poet, nevertheless, I claim, if any wonderful event should follow, a right to apply all and every such post-prognostic, to the purposes of the tragic muse.

Dead ducks cannot travel this weather, they say it is too hot for them, and they shall stink.

Yours and yours,

WM. COWPER.

CCLVII.

**ILL-TEMPERED SERMONS—MR. EABAN ORDAINED
TO AN INDEPENDENT CONGREGATION - WHY
MR. NEWTON WAS LOVED BY HIS PEOPLE
—CONTINUED FOGS.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 17, 1783.

Your letter reached Mr Scott while Mr Mayor was with him, whether it wrought any change in *his* opinion of that gentleman, as a preacher, I know not, but for my own part I give you full credit for the soundness and rectitude of *yours*, not only because I think highly of your judgment, but because it coincides exactly with that of every judicious person whom I have heard mention him. I believe no man was

ever scolded out of his sins. The heart, corrupt as it is, and because it is so, grows angry if it be not treated with some management and good manners, and scolds again. A surly mastiff will bear perhaps to be stroked, though he will growl even under that operation,—but if you touch him roughly, he will bite. There is no grace that the spirit of self can counterfeit with more success than a religious zeal. A man thinks he is fighting for Christ, and he is fighting for his own notions. He thinks that he is skilfully searching the hearts of others, when he is only gratifying the malignity of his own, and charitably supposes his hearer, destitute of all grace, that he may shine the more in his own eyes by comparison. When he has performed this notable task, he wonders that they are not converted: “he has given it them soundly, and if they do not tremble, and confess that God is in him of a truth, he gives them up as reprobate, incorrigible, and lost for ever.” But a man that loves me, if he sees me in an error, will pity me, and endeavour calmly to convince me of it, and persuade me to forsake it. If he has great and good news to tell me, he will not do it angrily, and in much heat and discomposure of spirit. It is not therefore easy to conceive on what ground a minister can justify conduct which only proves that he does not understand his errand. The absurdity of it would certainly strike him, if he were not himself deluded.

Mr Raban was ordained a minister to an Independent congregation at Yardley, on Thursday last. Three ministers attended, and three sermons were preached upon the occasion. Mr Bull was one of them. The church consists at present of only twenty-five members. He is to have no stipend, and was unanimously chosen. There was a large congregation, and vast numbers went from Olney. I have been informed that Mr Bull's examination of him was very close, and his own account of himself very affecting. All his own family were present, and all dissolved in tears.

Mr Hillyard, Mr Whitford's successor, who came hither from Kimbolton, is very acceptable and much followed. Though a man of no education, he has taken great pains to inform his mind. He often pronounces a word wrong,

but always uses it with propriety. He is never out of temper in the pulpit, but his sermons are experimental, searching, and evangelical. He bids fair consequently for considerable success. A people will always love a minister, if a minister seems to love his people. The old maxim, *Si mile agit in simile*, is in no case more exactly verified, therefore you were beloved at Olney, and if you preached to the Chickesaws, and Chachtaws, would be equally beloved by them.

The summer is passing away, and hitherto has hardly been either seen or felt. Perpetual clouds intercept the influences of the sun, and for the most part there is an autumnal coldness in the weather, though we are almost upon the eve of the longest day. We are glad to find that you still entertain the design of coming, and hope that you will bring sunshine with you.

We are well and always mindful of you, be mindful of us, and assured that we love you. Mrs Unwin is not the less thankful for the cocoanuts because they were so naught they could not be eaten. If they were bought, the seller was to blame, for which reason I thought it necessary to tell you what they were.

Yours, my dear friend, and Mrs Newton's
Affectionate WM COWPER

CCIVIII
VERSES ENCLOSED.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 20, 1783

THIS comes accompanied by a letter Mrs. Unwin received from Mrs Powley, she thought it would please you. I send you the petite piece I promised, not quite so worthy of your notice, but it is yours by engagement, otherwise, I believe you would never have seen it.

The ladies are in the greenhouse, and tea waits.

Yours more than I have time to tell you,
WM. COWPER.

CCLIX

WISHING HIM A PLEASANT JOURNEY.

TO THE REV WILLIAM BULL.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 27, 1783.

A FINE morning, though a shady one, has induced me to spend that time in walking which I had devoted to the quill, consequently I send you no letter for Mr Newton, but am obliged to postpone my answer to his last till the usual opportunity shall arrive. I cannot resist fine weather, and the omission is of no great consequence, both because I have nothing new to communicate, and because I have a frank which will convey that nothing to him gratis. I wish you and yours a pleasant excursion, as pleasant as the season and the scene to which you are going can possibly make it. I shall rejoice to hear from you, and am sufficiently flattered by the recollection, that just after hearing your protest against all letter-writing, I heard you almost promise to write a letter to me. The journeys of a man like you must be all sentimental journeys, and better worth the recital than Sterne's would have been, had he travelled to this moment.

Adieu, my friend!

Yours, WM COWPER

Mrs Unwin's love Send the Review.

CCLX

HIS PASSION FOR RETIREMENT—ROBERTSON
AND GIBBON.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 27, 1783

You cannot have more pleasure in receiving a letter from me, than I should find in writing it, were it not almost impossible in such a place to find a subject.

I live in a world abounding with incidents, upon which many grave, and perhaps some profitable observations might be made, but those incidents never reaching my unfortunate ears, both the entertaining narrative and the reflection it might suggest are to me annihilated and lost. I look back to the past week, and say, what did it produce?

I ask the same question of the week preceding, and duly receive the same answer from both,—nothing !—A situation like this, in which I am as unknown to the world, as I am ignorant of all that passes in it, in which I have nothing to do but to think, would exactly suit me, were my subjects of meditation as agreeable as my leisure is uninterrupted. My passion for retirement is not at all abated, after so many years spent in the most sequestered state, but rather increased,—a circumstance I should esteem wonderful to a degree not to be accounted for, considering the condition of my mind, did I not know, that we think as we are made to think, and of course approve and prefer, as Providence, who appoints the bounds of our habitation, chooses for us. Thus am I both free and a prisoner at the same time. The world is before me ; I am not shut up in the Bastille, there are no moats about my castle, no locks upon my gates, of which I have not the key,—but an invisible, uncontrollable agency, a local attachment, an inclination more forcible than I ever felt, even to the place of my birth, serves me for prison-walls, and for bounds which I cannot pass. In former years I have known sorrow, and before I had ever tasted of spiritual trouble. The effect was an abhorrence of the scene in which I had suffered so much, and a weariness to those objects which I had so long looked at with an eye of despondency and dejection. But it is otherwise with me now. The same cause subsisting, and in a much more powerful degree, fails to produce its natural effect. The very stones in the garden-walls are my intimate acquaintance. I should miss almost the minutest object, and be disagreeably affected by its removal, and am persuaded that were it possible I could leave this incommodious nook for a twelve month, I should return to it again with rapture, and be transported with the sight of objects which to all the world beside would be at least indifferent ; some of them perhaps, such as the ragged thatch and the tottering walls of the neighbouring cottages, disgusting. But so it is, and it is so, because here is to be my abode, and because such is the appointment of *Him* that placed me in it —

*Inte terrarum mihi præter omnes
Angulus ridet.*

It is the place of all the world I love the most, not for any happiness it affords me, but because here I can be miserable with most convenience to myself and with the least disturbance to others.

You wonder, and (I dare say) unfeignedly, because you do not think yourself entitled to such praise, that I prefer your style, as an historian, to that of the two most renowned writers of history the present day has seen. That you may not suspect me of having said more than my real opinion will warrant, I will tell you why. In your style I see no affectation. In every line of theirs I see nothing else. They disgust me always, Robertson with his pomp and his strut, and Gibbon with his finical and French manners. You are as correct as they. You express yourself with as much precision. Your words are ranged with as much propriety, but you do not set your periods to a tune. They discover a perpetual desire to exhibit themselves to advantage, whereas your subject engrosses you. They sing and you say, which, as history is a thing to be said, and not sung, is in my judgment, very much to your advantage. A writer that despises their tricks, and is yet neither inelegant nor inharmonious, proves himself, by that single circumstance, a man of superior judgment and ability to them both. You have my reasons. I honour a manly character, in which good sense, and a desire of doing good, are the predominant features, — but affectation is an emetic
W C

CCLXI. ✓

**WISHES HIM TO INQUIRE CONCERNING THE SALE
OF HIS POEMS—BALLADS—ANECDOTES OF
HIS GOLD-FINCHES.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

August 4, 1783

I FEEL myself sensibly obliged by the interest you take in the success of my productions. Your feelings upon the subject are such as I should have myself, had I an opportunity of calling Johnson aside to make the enquiry you

purpose. But I am pretty well prepared for the worst, and so long as I have the opinion of a few capable judges in my favour, and am thereby convinced that I have neither disgraced myself nor my subject, shall not feel myself disposed to any extreme anxiety about the sale. To aim with success at the spiritual good of mankind, and to become popular by writing on scriptural subjects, were an unreasonable ambition, even for a poet to entertain in days like these Verse may have many charms, but has none powerful enough to conquer the aversion of a dissipated age to such instruction. Ask the question therefore boldly, and he not mortified even though he should shake his head, and drop his chin, for it is no more than we have a reason to expect. We will lay the fault upon the vice of the times and we will acquit the poet

I am glad you were pleased with my Latin ode, and indeed with my English dirge, as much as I was myself. The tune laid me under a disadvantage, obliging me to write in Alexandrines, which I suppose would suit no one but a French one, neither did I intend any thing more than that the subject and the words should be sufficiently accommodated to the music. The ballad is a species of poetry, I believe, peculiar to this country, equally adapted to the drollest and the most tragical subjects. Simplicity and ease are its proper characteristics. Our forefathers excelled in it, but we moderns have lost the art. It is observed, that we have few good English odes. But to make amends, we have many excellent ballads, not inferior perhaps in true poetical merit to some of the very best odes that the Greek or Latin languages have to boast of. It is a sort of composition I was ever fond of, and if graver matters had not called me another way, should have addicted myself to it more than to any other. I inherit a taste for it from my father, who succeeded well in it himself, and who lived at a time when the best pieces in that way were produced. What can be prettier than Gay's ballad, or rather Swift's Arbuthnot's, Pope's, and Gay's, in the *What do ye call it*—" 'Twas when the seas were roaring ? " I have been well informed that they well contributed, and that the most celebrated association of clever fellows this country ever saw

did not think it beneath them to unite their strength and abilities in the composition of a song. The success however answered to their wishes, and our puny days will never produce such another. The ballads that Bourne has translated, beautiful in themselves, are still more beautiful in his version of them, infinitely surpassing, in my judgment, all that Ovid or Tibullus have left behind them. They are quite as elegant, and far more touching and pathetic than the tenderest strokes of either.

So much for ballads, and ballad writers. "A worthy subject," you will say, "for a man whose head might be filled with better things,"—and *it* is filled with better things, but to so ill a purpose that I thrust into it all manner of topics that may prove more amusing, as for instance, I have two gold-finches, which in the summer occupy the greenhouse. A few days since, being employed in cleaning out their cages, I placed that which I had in hand upon the table, while the other hung against the wall, the windows and the doors stood wide open. I went to fill the fountain at the pump, and on my return was not a little surprised to find a goldfinch sitting on the top of the cage I had been cleaning, and singing to and kissing the goldfinch within. I approached him, and he discovered no fear, still nearer, and he discovered none. I advanced my hand towards him, and he took no notice of it. I seized him, and supposed I had caught a new bird, but casting my eye upon the other cage perceived my mistake. Its inhabitant, during my absence, had contrived to find an opening, where the wire had been a little bent, and made no other use of the escape it afforded him, than to salute his friend, and to converse with him more intimately than he had done before. I returned him to his proper mansion, but in vain. In less than a minute he had thrust his little person through the aperture again, and again perched upon his neighbour's cage, kissing him, as at the first, and singing, as if transported with the fortunate adventure. I could not but respect such friendship, as for the sake of its gratification had twice declined an opportunity to be free, and, consenting to their union, resolved that for the future one cage should hold them both. I am glad of such incidents, for at a

pinch, and when I need entertainment, the versification of them serves to divert me

I hope you will receive a very fine melon, which we send according to your last direction, it will leave this place on Wednesday

I transcribe for you a piece of Madam Guyon, not as the best, but as being shorter than many, and as good as most of them

Yours ever, W C

CXLXII

SICKLY SEASON—REMARKS ON MADAME GUYON'S FAMILIAR STYLE OF DEVOTION.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 7, 1783

So long a silence needs an apology. I have been hindered by a three-weeks visit from our Hoxton friends, and by a cold, and feverish complaint, which are but just removed. A foggy summer is likely to be attended with a sickly autumn; such multitudes are indisposed by fevers in this country, that the farmers have with difficulty gathered in their harvest, the labourers having been almost every day carried out of the field incapable of work, and many die.

The French poetess is certainly chargeable with the fault you mention, though I thought it not very glaring in the piece I sent you. I have endeavoured indeed, in all the translations I have made, to cure her of that evil, either by the suppression of passages exceptionable upon that account, or by a more sober and respectful manner of expression. Still however she will be found to have conversed familiarly with God, but I hope not foolishly, nor so as to give a reasonable disgust to a religious reader. That God should deal familiarly with man, or, which is the same thing, that he should permit man to deal familiarly with him, seems not very difficult to conceive, or presumptuous to suppose, when somethings are taken into consideration. Were to the sinner that shall dare to take a liberty with Him that is not warranted by his word, or to which He himself has not encouraged him? Till the incarnation of the Godhead

is verily believed He is unapproachable by man upon any terms, and in that case to accost him as if we had a right of relationship, when in reality we have none, would be to affront Him to his face. But an Incarnate God is as much human as divine. When He assumed man's nature, he revealed himself as the friend of man, as the brother of every soul that loves him. He conversed freely with man while he was upon earth, and as freely with him after his resurrection. I doubt not therefore that it is possible to enjoy an access to Him even now unincumbered with ceremonious awe, easy, delightful, and without constraint. This however can only be the lot of those who make it the business of their lives to please him, and to cultivate communion with him. And then I presume there can be no danger of offence, because such a habit of the soul is of his own creation, and near as we come, we come no nearer to him than He is pleased to draw us. If we address him as children, it is because he tells us he is our father. If we unbosom ourselves to him as to a friend, it is because he calls us friends, and if we speak to him in the language of love, it is because he first used it, thereby teaching us that it is the language he delights to hear from his people. But I confess that through the weakness, the folly, and corruption of human nature, this privilege, like all other Christian privileges, is liable to abuse. There is a mixture of evil in every thing we do, indulgence encourages us to encroach, and while we exercise the rights of children, we become childish. Here I think is the point in which my authoress failed, and here it is that I have particularly guarded my translation, not afraid of representing her as dealing with God familiarly, but foolishly, irreverently, and without due attention to his majesty, of which she is sometimes guilty. A wonderful fault for such a woman to fall into, who spent her life in the contemplation of his glory, who seems to have been always impressed with a sense of it, and sometimes quite absorbed in the views she had of it. W C

CCLXIII

**EPIDEMIC—MORTALITY—HIS OWN FEELINGS—
MR. SCOTT—MR. BACON.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept. 8, 1743

Mrs. UNWIN would have answered your kind note from Bedford, had not a pain in her side prevented her. It still continues, but is less violent than it was. I, who am her secretary upon such occasions, should certainly have answered it for her, but was hindered by illness, having been myself seized with a fever immediately after your departure. The account of your recovery gave us great pleasure, and I am persuaded that you will feel yourself repaid by the information that I give you of mine. The reveries your head was filled with, while your disorder was most prevalent, though they were but reveries, and the off-spring of a heated imagination, afforded you yet a comfortable evidence of the predominant bias of your heart and mind to the best subjects. I had none such, it would have been wonderful if I had: indeed I was in no degree delirious, nor has any thing less than a fever really dangerous ever made me so. In this respect, if in no other, I may be said to have a strong head, and perhaps for the same reason that wine would never make me drunk, an ordinary degree of fever has no effect upon my understanding.

The epidemic begins to be more mortal as the autumn comes on. Two men of drunken memory, Bob Freeman and Bob Kitchener, have died of it since you went. In Bedfordshire it is reported, how truly however I cannot say, to be nearly as fatal as the plague. It is well for those about me, that I am neither very subject to fevers, nor apt to loose my senses when I have one. My ravings would be those of a man more conversant with things above, and if they bore any resemblance to my habitual musings, would serve only to shock bystanders. I heard lately of a clerk in a public office, whose chief employment it was for many years to administer oaths, who being light-headed in a fever, of which he died, spent the last week of his life in crying day and light—"So help you God—kiss the book—

give me a shilling " What a wretch in comparison with you, and how happy in comparison with me !

I have indeed been lately more dejected and more distressed than usual, more harassed by dreams in the night, and more deeply poisoned by them in the following day. I know not what is portented by an alteration for the worse after eleven years of misery, but firmly believe that it is not designed as the introduction of a change for the better. You know not what I suffered while you were here, nor was there any need you should. Your friendship for me would have made you in some degree a partaker of my woes, and your share in them would have been increased by your inability to help me. Perhaps indeed they took a keener edge from the consideration of your presence, the friend of my heart, the person with whom I had formerly taken sweet counsel, no longer useful to me as a minister, no longer pleasant to me as a Christian, was a spectacle that must necessarily add the bitterness of mortification to the sadness of despair. I now see a long winter before me, and am to get through it as I can. I know the ground before I tread upon it, it is hollow, it is agitated, it suffers shocks in every direction, it is like the soil of Calabria, all whirlpool and undulation, but I must reel through it,—at least if I be not swallowed up by the way.

Mr Scott has been ill almost ever since you left us. This light atmosphere, and these unremitting storms, are very unfriendly to an asthmatic habit. He suffers accordingly, and last Saturday, as on many foregoing Saturdays, was obliged to clip on a blister by way of preparation for his Sunday labours. He cannot draw breath upon any other terms. If holy orders were always conferred upon such conditions, I question but even bishopricks themselves would want an occupant. But he is easy and cheerful, and likes his wages well.

I beg you will mention me kindly to Mr Bacon, and make him sensible that if I did not write the paragraph he wished for, it was not owing to any want of respect for the desire he expressed, but to mere inability. If in a state of mind that almost disqualifies me for society I could possibly wish to form a new connexion, I should

wish to know him, but I never shall, and things being as they are, I do not regret it. You are my old friend, therefore I do not spare you, having known you in better days, I make you pay for any pleasure I might then afford you, by a communication of my present pains. But I have no claims of this sort upon Mr Bacon.

Be pleased to remember us both, with much affection to Mrs Newton, and to her and your Eliza, to Miss Catlett likewise, if she is with you. Poor Eliza droops and languishes, but in the land to which she is going, she will hold up her head and droop no more. A sickness that leads the way to everlasting life is better than the life of an antediluvian. Accept our united love. My dear friend, sincerely yours,
W. C.

Lady Austen desires me to add her compliments

CCLXIV

EPIDEMIC AT OLNEY--JOHN THE TAILOR-- VISIT TO MR. BULL.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 21, 1783

We are glad that having been attacked by a fever, which has often proved fatal, and almost always leaves the sufferer debilitated to the last degree you find yourself so soon restored to health, and your strength recovered. Your health and strength are useful to others, and in that view important in *his* account who dispenses both, and by your means a more precious gift than either. For my own part, though I have not been laid up I have never been perfectly well since you left us. A smart fever, which lasted indeed but a few hours, succeeded by lassitude and want of spirits, that seemed still to indicate a feverish habit, has made for some time, and still makes me very unfit for my favourite occupations, writing and reading,—so that even a letter, and even a letter to you, is not without its burthen. An emetic which I took yesterday, has, I believe, done me more good than any thing, but I shall be able to ascertain that point better when I have recovered from the fatigue of it. John Lane

has had the epidemic, and has it still, but grows better. When he was first seized with it, he gave notice that he should die, but in this only instance of prophetic exertion he seems to have been mistaken: he has however, been very near it. Bett Fisher was buried last night: she died of the distemper. Molly Clifton is dying, but of a decline. I should have told you, that poor John has been very ready to depart, and much comforted through his whole illness. He, you know, though a silent, has been a very steady professor, and therefore, though but a botcher, which is some what less than a tailor, seems to have been more than a match for the last enemy. Oh, what things pass in cottages and hovels, which the great never dream of! French philosophers amuse themselves, and, according to their own phrase, cover themselves with glory, by inventing air-balls, which, by their own buoyancy, ascend above the clouds and are lost in the regions which no human contrivance could ever penetrate before. An English tailor, an inhabitant of the dunghills of Silver End, prays, and his prayer ascends into the cars of the Lord of Sabaoth. He indeed covers himself with glory, fights battles, and gains victories, but makes no noise. Europe is not astonished at his feats, foreign Academies do not seek him for a member, he will never discover the art of flying, or send a globe of taffeta up to heaven. But he will go thither himself. I am afraid there is hardly a philosopher among them that would be wise enough to change conditions with him if he could, yet certainly there is not one that would not be infinitely a gainer by doing so.

Since you went, we dined with Mr. Bull at Newport. I had sent him notice of our visit a week before, which, like a contemplative, studious man, as he is, he put in his pocket and forgot. When we arrived, the parlour windows were shut, and the house had the appearance of being uninhabited. After waiting some time, however, the maid opened the door, and the master presented himself. Mrs. Bull and her son were gone to Redford, but having found what we chiefly wanted, we dined and spent the afternoon together comfortably enough. It is hardly worth while to observe so repeatedly that his garden seems a spot contrived

only for the growth of melancholy, but being always affected by it in the same way I cannot help it. He showed me a nook, in which he had placed a bench, and where he said he found it very refreshing to smoke his pipe and meditate. Here he sits, with his back against one brick wall, and his nose against another, which must, you know, be very refreshing, and greatly assist meditation. He rejoices the more in this niche, because it is an acquisition made at some expense, and with no small labour, several loads of earth were removed in order to make it,—which loads of earth, had I the management of them, I should carry thither again, and fill up a place more fit in appearance to be a repository for the dead than the living. I would on no account put any man out of conceit with his innocent enjoyments, and therefore never tell him my thoughts upon this subject, but he is not seldom low spirited, and I cannot but suspect that his situation helps to make him so.

Mrs. Unwin begs that Mrs. Newton will be so kind as to let her box comb, with fine teeth on both sides. She says the ham arrived safe.

I shall be obliged to you for Hawkesworth's Voyages, when it can be sent conveniently. The long evenings are beginning, and nothing shortens them so effectually as reading loud.

Lady Austen returns her compliments. The Joneses are gone to Brighton. Mr. Page has warning to quit Ransstone. Mr. Scott is better than he has been, but so weak that he is obliged to ride to Weston. Mrs. Unwin is well, and bids me assure you of our joint love, which I would be understood to do in the warmest terms, and with the greatest sincerity. Our love likewise attends Eliza.

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

CCCLV

**ABUSES OF CHRISTIANITY LEADING TO INFIDELITY—PLEASURE IN READING VOYAGES
OF DISCOVERY**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 6, 1783

It is indeed a melancholy consideration, that the Gospel,

whose direct tendency is to promote the happiness of mankind in the present life, as well as in the life to come, and which so effectually answers the design of its Author, whenever it is well understood and sincerely believed, should through the ignorance, the bigotry, the superstition of its professors, and the ambition of popes, and princes the tools of popes, have produced incidentally so much mischief, only furnishing the world with a plausible excuse to worry each other, while they sanctified the worst cause with the specious pretext of zeal for the furtherance of the best.

Angels descend from Heaven to publish peace between man and his Maker, the Prince of Peace himself comes to confirm and establish it, and war, hatred, and desolation are the consequence. Thousands quarrel about the interpretation of a book which none of them understand. He that is slain dies firmly persuaded that the crown of martyrdom expects him, and he that slew him is equally convinced that he has done God service. In reality they are both mistaken, and equally unentitled to the honour they arrogate to themselves. If a multitude of blind men should start out for a certain city, and dispute about the right road, that a battle ensued between them, the probable effect would be that none of them would ever reach it, and such a fray preposterous and shocking in the extreme would exhibit a picture in some degree resembling the original of which we have been speaking. And why is not the world thus occupied at present?—even because they have exchanged zeal, that was no better than madness, for an indifferently equally pitiable and absurd. The holy sepulchre has lost its importance in the eyes of nations Christians, not because the light of true wisdom has delivered them from a superstitious attachment to the spot, but because He that was buried in it is no longer regarded by them as the Saviour of the world. The exercise of reason, enlightened by philosophy, has cured them indeed of the misery of an absurd understanding, but together with the delusion they have lost the substance, and for the sake of the lies that we grafted upon it have quarrelled with the truth itself. Hence then we see the *ne plus ultra* of human wisdom, at least in affairs of religion. It enlightens the mind with respect to

non essentials, but with respect to that in which the essence of Christianity consists, leaves it perfectly in the dark. It can discover many errors that in different ages have disgraced the faith, but it is only to make way for the admission of one more fatal than them all, which represents that faith itself as a delusion. Why those evils have been permitted shall be known hereafter. One thing in the mean time is certain, that the folly and frenzy of the professed disciples of the Gospel have been more dangerous to its interests, than all the avowed hostilities of its adversaries; and perhaps for this cause these mischiefs might be offered to reveal for a season, that its divine original and nature might be the more illustrated, when it should appear that it is unable to stand its ground for a season against that most formidable of all attacks, the indiscretion of its friends. The images that have followed this perversion of the truth have proved indeed a stumbling block to individuals. The sages of this world, with all their wisdom have not been able to distinguish between the blessing and the curse of it. Nature was offended, and Gideon has turned his back on the flock of Christ is still nourished, and still increases. Notwithstanding the march of a philosopher is able to convert bread into a stone, and a fish into a serpent.

I am much obliged to you for the voyages which I received, and began to read last night. My imagination is so rivetted upon these occasions, that I seem to partake with the navigators in all the dangers they encountered. I lose my anchor, my mainsail is rent into shreds. I kill a shark, and by signs converse with a Patagonian, and all this without moving from the inside. The principal hunts of these pursuits, that have been made around the globe seem likely to be the amusement of those that stand at home. Discoveries have been made, but such discoveries as will hardly justify the expense of such undertakings. We brought away an Indian, and having debauched him, we sent him home to communicate the infection to his country, line it to be sure, but such as will not offend the consciences that live upon bread and fruit, and have no mines to make them worthy of our acquaintance will be but little visited for the future. So much the better for them! their poverty is indeed their mercy. Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

CCLXVI

**AMERICAN LOYALISTS—PROSPECTS OF THE
UNITED STATES.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

October, 1783

I AM much obliged to you for your American anecdotes, and feel the obligation perhaps more sensibly, the labour of transcribing being in particular that to which I myself have the greatest aversion. The Loyalists are much to be pitied, driven from all the comforts that depend upon and are intimately connected with a residence in their native land, and sent to cultivate a distant one, without the means of doing it, abandoned too, through a deplorable necessity, by the government to which they have sacrificed all,—they exhibit a spectacle of distress, which one cannot view even at this distance without participating in what they feel. Why could not some of our useless wastes and forests have been allotted to their support? To have built them houses indeed, and to have furnished them with implements of husbandry, would have put us to no small expense, but I suppose the increase of population, and the improvement of the soil, would soon have been felt as a national advantage, and have indemnified the state, if not enriched it. But I am afraid that nothing so virtuous, or so wise, is to be looked for in the public measures of the present day. We are bountiful to foreigners, and neglect those of our own household. I remember that, compassionating the miseries of the Portuguese, at the time of the Lisbon earthquake, we sent them a ship load of tools to clear away the rubbish with, and to assist them in rebuilding the city. I remember, too, it was reported at the time, that the court of Portugal accepted our wheel-barrow and spades with a very ill grace, and treated our bounty with contempt. An act like this in behalf of our brethren, carried only a little further, might possibly have redeemed them from ruin, have resulted in emolument to ourselves, have been received with joy, and repaid with gratitude. Such are my speculations upon the subject, who not being a politician by profession, and very seldom giving my attention for a moment to any such matter, may not be

aware of difficulties and objections, which they of the cabinet can discern with half an eye. Perhaps to have taken under our protection a race of men proscribed by the Congress might be thought dangerous to the interests we hope to have hereafter in their high and mighty regards and affections. It is ever the way of those who rule the earth, to leave out of their reckoning Him who rules the universe. They forget that the poor have a friend more powerful to avenge, than they can be to oppress, and that treachery and perfidy must therefore prove bad policy in the end. The Americans themselves appear to me to be in a situation little less pitiable than that of the deserted loyalists. A revolt can hardly be said to have been successful that has exchanged only an apprehended tyranny for a real one, and has shaken off the restraints of a well ordered government, merely to give room and opportunity for the jarring opinions and interests of its abettors to throw all into a state of anarchy. This is evidently the case at present, and without a special interposition of Providence is likely to be for years to come. They will at last, perhaps, after much ill temper and bloodshed, settle into some sort of establishment, but hardly, I think, into a more desirable one (and it seems they themselves are pretty much of the same opinion) than they enjoyed before. Their fears of arbitrary imposition were certainly well founded. A struggle therefore might be necessary, in order to prevent it, and this end might surely have been answered without a renunciation of dependence. But the passions of a whole people, once put in motion, are not soon quieted. Contest begets aversion, a little success inspires more ambitious hopes, and thus a slight quarrel terminates at last in a breach never to be healed, and perhaps in the ruin of both parties. It does not seem likely, that a country so distinguished by the Creator with every thing that can make it desirable, should be given up to desolation for ever, and that possibly may have reason on their side, who suppose that in time it will have the pre-eminence over all others, but the day of such prosperity seems far distant. Omnipotence indeed can hasten it, and it may dawn when it is least expected. But we govern ourselves in all our reason-

ings by present appearances. Persons at least no better informed than myself are constrained to do so.

You surprised me most agreeably with a polite and sensible letter from Mr Bacon, that good man has a place in my heart, though I never saw him, and never may. I shall never see the print he so obligingly presents me with, without sentiments of gratitude and friendship, and shall endeavour to answer his letter in such terms as his kindness justly claims, as soon as the print arrives.

We have opened two of the cocoa nuts, one naught and the other excellent, the third promises to be a good one. I intended to have taken another subject when I began, and I wish I had. No man living is less qualified to settle notions than I am, but when I write to you, I talk,—thus is, I write as fast as my pen can run, and on this occasion it ran away with me. I acknowledge myself in your debt for your last favour, but cannot pay you now, unless you will accept as payment, what I know you value more than all I can say beside, the most unfeigned assurances of my affection for you and yours.

Yours, &c

W C

CCCLVII

NOTHING TO SAY ON POLITICS—HIS POEMS ON THE ROYAL GEORGE WRITTEN TO ENCOURAGE THE ATTEMPT AT WEIGHING THAT SHIP.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

Oct 20, 1783

I SHOULD not have been thus long silent, had I known with certainty where a letter of mine might find you. Your summer excursions however are now at an end, and addressing a line to you in the centre of the busy scene in which you spend your winter, I am pretty sure of my mark.

I see the winter approaching without much concern, though a passionate lover of fine weather and the pleasant scenes of summer, but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon the earth, I suppose, so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fireside in the winter. I mean however an Englishman that

lives in the country, for in London it is not very easy to avoid intrusion. I have two ladies to read to, sometimes more, but never less. At present we are circumnavigating the globe, and I find the old story with which I amused myself some years since, through the great felicity of a memory not very retentive, almost new. I am however sadly at a loss for Cook's voyage, can you send it? I shall be glad of Foster's too. These together will make the winter pass merrily, and you will much oblige me. W C

CCCLXVIII

CHEERFUL ACCOUNT OF HIMSELF.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct 20, 1783

I HAVE nothing to say on political subjects, for two reasons, first because I know none that at present would prove very amusing, especially to you who love your country and, secondly, because there are none that I have the vanity to think myself qualified to discuss. I must beg leave, however, to rejoice a little at the future of the Cause d'Escomptes, because I think the French have well deserved it, and to mourn equally that the Royal George cannot be weighed the rather, because I wrote two poems, one Latin and one English, to encourage the attempt. The former of these only having been published, which the sailors would understand but little of, may be the reason, perhaps, why they have not succeeded.

Believe me, my friend,

Affectionately yours, WM COWPER

CCCLXIX

**INCENDIARIES—OLNEY NEWS—A THIEF AT THE
CART'S-TAIL—TEEDONS—ANTICIPATIONS OF
BALLOON TRAVELLING.**

• TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov. 17, 1783

A PARCEL arrived last night, the content of which shall

be disposed of according to order. We thank Mrs Newton (not from the teeth outwards) for the tooth-brushes.

The country around us is much alarmed with apprehensions of fire. Two have happened since that of Olney. One at Hitchin, where the damage is said to amount to eleven thousand pounds, and another, at a place not far from Hitchin, of which I have not learnt the name. Letters have been dropped at Bedford, threatening to burn the town, and the inhabitants have been so intimidated as to have placed a guard in many parts of it, several nights past. Some madman or some devil has broke loose, who it is to be hoped will pay dear for these effusions of his malignity. Since our conflagration here, we have sent two women and a boy to the justice, for depredation, Sue Riviss, for stealing a piece of beef, which, in her excuse, she said she intended to take care of. This lady, whom you well remember, escaped for want of evidence, not that evidence was indeed wanting, but our men of Gotham judged it unnecessary to send it. With her went the woman I mentioned before, who, it seems, has made some sort of profession, but upon this occasion allowed herself a latitude of conduct rather inconsistent with it, having filled her apron with wearing apparel, which she likewise intended to take care of. She would have gone to the county gaol, had Billy Raban, the baker's son, who prosecuted, insisted upon it, but he good naturedly, though I think weakly, interposed in her favour, and begged her off. The young gentleman who accompanied these fair ones, is the junior son of Molly Boswell. He had stolen some non-work, the property of Griggs, the butcher. Being convicted, he was ordered to be whipt, which operation he underwent at the cart's tail, from the stone-house to the high arch, and back again. He seemed to show great fortitude, but it was all an imposition upon the public. The headle, who performed, had filled his left hand with red ochre, through which, after every stroke, he drew the lash of his whip, leaving the appearance of a wound upon the skin, but in reality not hurting him at all. This being perceived by Mr Constable Hunscomb, who followed the headle, he applied his cane, without any such management or precaution, to the shoulders of the too

merciful executioner The scene immediately became more interesting The beadle could by no means be prevailed upon to strike hard, which provoked the constable to still harder, and this double flogging continued, till a lass of Silver-end, pitying the pitiful beadle thus suffering under the hands of the pitiless constable, joined the procession, and placing herself immediately behind the latter, seized him by his capillary club, and pulling him backwards by the same, slapt his face with a most Amazonian fury This concatenation of events has taken up more of my paper than I intended it should, but I could not forbear to inform you how the beadle threshed the thief, the constable the beadle, and the lady the constable, and how the thief was the only person concerned who suffered nothing Mr Leedon has been here, and is gone again He came to thank me for an old pair of breeches In answer to our enquiries after his health, he replied that he had a slow fever which made him take all possible care not to inflame his blood I admitted his prudence, but in his particular instance, could not very clearly discern the need of it Pump water will not heat him much, and, to speak a little in his own style, more inebriating fluids are to him, I fancy, not very attainable He brought us news, the truth of which, however, I do not vouch for, that the town of Bedford was actually on fire yesterday, and the flames not extinguished when the bearer of the tidings left it

Swift observes, when he is giving his reasons why the preacher is elevated always above his hearers, that let the crowd be as great as it will below, there is always room enough over-head If the French philosophers can carry their art of flying to the perfection they desire, the observation may be reversed, the crowd will be over-head, and they will have most room who stay below I can assure you, however, upon my own experience, that this way of travelling is very delightful I dreamt, a night or two since, that I drove myself through the upper regions in a balloon and pair, with the greatest ease and security Having finished my tour I intended, I made a short turn, and, with one flourish of my whip, descended; my horses prancing and curvetting with an infinite share of spirit, but without the least danger,

either to me or my vehicle. The time, we may suppose, is at hand, and seems to be prognosticated by my dream, when these airy excursions will be universal, when judges will fly the circuit, and bishops their visitations; and when the tour of Europe will be performed with much greater speed, and with equal advantage, by all who travel merely for the sake of having it to say, that they have made it.

I beg you will accept for yourself and yours our unfeigned love, and remember me affectionately to Mr Bacon when you see him.

Yours, my dear friend, WM. COWPER

CCLXX

COWPER FOND OF READING VOYAGES AND TRAVELS—HE COULD CONSENT TO BE RICHER

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 23, 1783

YOUR opinion of voyages and travels would spoil an appetite less keen than mine, but being pretty much, perhaps more than any man who can be said to enjoy his liberty, confined to a spot, and being very desirous of knowing all that can be known of this same planet of ours, while I have the honour to belong to it,—and having, besides, no other means of information at my command, I am constrained to be satisfied with narratives, not always, indeed, to be implicitly depended upon, but which, being subjected to the exercise of a little consideration, cannot materially deceive us. Swinburne's is a book I had fixed upon, and determined it possible to procure, being pleased with some extracts from it, which I found in the Review. I need hardly add that I shall be much obliged to Mrs Hill for a sight of it. I account myself truly and much indebted to that lady for the trouble she is so kind as to take upon my account, and shall esteem myself her debtor for all the amusement I meet with, in the southern hemisphere, should I be so fortunate as to get there. My reading is pretty much circumscribed, both by want of books and the influence of particular reasons. Politics are my abhorrence, being almost always hypothetical, fluctuating, and impracticable.

Philosophy—I should have said natural philosophy, mathematically studied, does not suit me, and such exhibitions of that subject, as are calculated for less learned readers, I have read in former days, and remember in the present Poetry, English poetry, I never touch, being pretty much addicted to the writing of it, and knowing that much intercourse with those gentlemen betrays us unavoidably into a habit of imitation, which I hate and despise most cordially.

I am glad my uncle is so well, and that he found new beauties in so old an acquaintance, as the scene at Hastings. My most affectionate respects to him, if you please, when you see him next—If *he* be the happiest man, who has least money in the funds, there are few upon earth whom I have any occasion to envy. I would consent, however, to have my pounds multiplied into thousands, even at the hazard of all I might feel from that tormenting passion. I send nothing to the papers myself but Unwin sometimes sends for me. His receptacle of my squibs is the Public Advertiser, but they are very few, and my present occupations are of a kind that will still have a tendency to make them fewer. Yours, my dear friend,

WM COWPER

CCLXXI

RESENTMENT FOR NEGLECT.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Nov 21, 1783

AN evening unexpectedly retired, and which your mother and I spend without company (an occurrence far from frequent), affords me a favourable opportunity to write by to-morrow's post, which else I could not have found. You are very good to consider my literary necessities with so much attention, and I feel proportionably grateful. Blair's Lectures (though I suppose they must make a part of my private studies, not being *ad captum feminarum*) will be perfectly welcome.

You say you felt my verses; I assure you that in this you followed my example, for I felt them first. A man's lordship is nothing to me, any further than in connexion with

qualities that entitle him to my respect. If he thinks himself privileged by it to treat me with neglect, I am his humble servant, and shall never be at a loss to render him an equivalent. I am however most angry with the manager. He has published a book since he received mine, and has not vouchsafed to send it me, a requital which good manners, not to say the remembrance of former friendship, ought to have suggested. I will not, however, belie my knowledge of mankind so much, as to seem surprised at treatment which I had abundant reason to expect. To these men, with whom I was once intimate, and for many years, I am no longer necessary, no longer convenient, or in any respect an object. They think of me as of the man in the moon, and whether I have a lantern, a dog and a faggot, or whether I have neither of those desirable accommodations, is to them a matter of perfect indifference upon that point we are agreed, our indifference is mutual, and were I to publish again, which is not impossible, I should give them a proof of it.

L'Estrange's Josephus has lately furnished us with evening lectures. But the historian is so tediously circumstantial, and the translator so insupportably coarse and vulgar, that we are all three weary of him. How would Tacitus have shone upon such a subject, great master as he was of the art of description, concise without obscurity, and affecting without being poetical. But so it was ordered, and for wise reasons no doubt, that the greatest calamities any people ever suffered, and an accomplishment of one of the most signal prophecies in the Scripture, should be recorded by one of the worst writers. The man was a temporizer too, and courted the favour of his Roman masters at the expense of his own creed, or else an infidel, and absolutely disbelieved it. You will think me very difficult to please. I quarrel with Josephus for the want of elegance, and with some of our modern historians for having too much. With him, for running right forward like a gazette, without stopping to make a single observation by the way, and with them, for pretending to delineate characters that existed two thousand years ago, and to discover the motives by which they were influenced, with the same precision as if they had been

their contemporaries. Simplicity is become a very rare quality in a writer. In the decline of great kingdoms, and where refinement in all the arts is carried to an excess, I suppose it is always rare. The latter Roman writers are remarkable for false ornament, they were yet no doubt admired by the readers of their own day, and with respect to authors of the present era, the most popular among them appear to me equally censurable on the same account. Swift and Addison were simple, Pope knew how to be so, but was frequently tinged with affectation, since their day I hardly know a celebrated writer who deserves the character. But your mother wants room for a post-script, so my lecture must conclude abruptly.

Yours, W. C.

CCLXXII

PRIVILEGES OF AGE—FIRST INTRODUCTION TO THE THROCKMORTONS.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

It is hard upon us striplings who have uncles still living (N.B. I myself have an uncle still alive,) that those venerable gentlemen should stand in our way, even when the ladies are in question, that I, for instance, should find in one page of your letter a hope that Miss Shuttleworth would be of your party, and be told in the next that she is engaged to your uncle. Well, we may perhaps never be uncles, but we may reasonably hope that the time is coming, when others, as young as we are now, shall envy us the privileges of old age, and see us engross that share in the attention of the ladies to which their youth must aspire in vain. Make our compliments if you please to your sister Elizabeth, and tell her that we are both mortified at having missed the pleasure of seeing her.

Balloons are so much the mode, that even in this country we have attempted a balloon. You may possibly remember that at a place called Weston, little more than a mile from Onley, there lives a family whose name is Throckmorton. The present possessor of the estate is a young man whom

I remember a boy. He has a wife, who is young, genteel and handsome. They are Papists, but much more amiable than many Protestants. We never had any intercourse with the family, though ever since we lived here we have enjoyed the range of their pleasure grounds, having been favoured with a key, which admits us into all. When this man succeeded to the estate, on the death of his elder brother, and came to settle at Weston, I sent him a complimentary card, requesting the continuance of that privilege, having till then enjoyed it by the favour of his mother, who on that occasion went to finish her days at Bath. You may conclude that he granted it, and for about two years nothing more passed between us. A fortnight ago, I received an invitation in the civillest terms, in which he told me that the next day he should attempt to fill a balloon, and if it would be any pleasure to me to be present, should be happy to see me. Your mother and I went. The whole country were there, but the balloon, could not be filled. The endeavour was, I believe, very philosophically made, but such a process depends for its success upon such niceties as make it very precarious. Our reception was however flattering to a great degree, insomuch that more notice seemed to be taken of us, than we could possibly have expected, indeed rather more than of any of his other guests. They even seemed anxious to recommend themselves to our regards. We drank chocolate, and were asked to dine but were engaged. A day or two afterwards, Mrs. Unwin and I walked that way, and were overtaken in a shower. I found a tree that I thought would shelter us both,—a large elm, in a grove that fronts the mansion. Mrs. F. observed us, and running towards us in the rain insisted on our walking in. He was gone out. We sat chatting with her till the weather cleared up, and then at her instance took a walk with her in the garden. The garden is almost their only walk and is certainly their only retreat in which they are not liable to interruption. She offered us a key of it in a manner that made it impossible not to accept it, and said she would see us one. A few days afterwards, in the cool of the evening, we walked that way again. We saw them going toward the house, and exchange bows and courtesies at a little

distance, but did not join them. In a few minutes, when we had passed the house, and had almost reached the gate that opens out of the park into the adjoining field, I heard the iron gate belonging to the court-yard ring, and saw Mr T. advancing hastily toward us, we made equal haste to meet him, he presented to us the key, which I told him I esteemed a singular favour, and after a few such speeches as are made on such occasions, we parted. This happened about a week ago. I concluded nothing less, than that all this civility and attention was designed, on their part, as a prelude to a nearer acquaintance, but here at present the matter rests. I should like exceedingly to be on an easy footing there, to give a morning call, and now and then to receive one, but nothing more. For though he is one of the most agreeable men I ever saw, I could not wish to visit him in any other way, neither our house, furniture, servants, or income, being such as qualify us to make entertainments, neither would I on any account be introduced to the neighbouring gentry, which must be the consequence of our dining there, there not being a man in the country, except himself, with whom I could endure to associate. They are squires, merely such, purse-proud and sportsmen. But Mr T. is altogether a man of fashion, and respectable on every account.

I have told you a long story. Farewell. We number the days as they pass, and are glad that we shall see you and your sister soon.

Yours, &c

W C

CCCLXXIII

HE HAS NO SPARE TIME—SPECULATIONS CONCERNING THE WAY IN WHICH THE ANTEDILUVIANS EMPLOYED THEMSELVES—THEOLOGICAL REVIEW.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 30, 1783

I HAVE neither long visits to pay nor to receive, nor ladies

to spend hours in telling me that which might be told in five minutes, yet often find myself obliged to be an economist of time, and to make the most of a short opportunity. Let our station be as retired as it may, there is no want of playthings and avocations, nor much need to seek them, in this world of ours. Business, or what presents itself to us under that imposing character, will find us out, even in the stillest retreat, and plead its importance, how ever trivial in reality, as a just demand upon our attention. It is wonderful how by means of such real or seeming necessities, my time is stolen away. I have just time to observe that time is short, and by the time I have made the observation, time is gone. I have wondered in former days at the patience of the *Antediluvian* world; that they could endure a life almost millenary, with so little variety as seems to have fallen to their share. It is probable that they had much fewer employments than we. Their affairs lay in a narrower compass, their libraries were indifferently furnished, philosophical researches were carried on with much less industry and acuteness of penetration, and ladders, perhaps, were not even invented. How then could seven or eight hundred years of life be supportable? I have asked this question formerly, and been at a loss to resolve it, but I think I can answer it now. I will suppose myself born a thousand years before Noah was born or thought of. I rise with the sun, I worship, I prepare my breakfast, I swallow a bucket of goats' milk, and a dozen good sizeable cake. I fasten a new string to my bow, and my youngest boy, a lad of about thirty years of age, having played with my arrows till he has stript off all the feathers, I find myself obliged to repair them. The morning is thus spent in preparing for the chase, and it is become necessary that I should dine. I dig up my roots, I wash them, I boil them, I find them not done enough. I boil them again, my wife is angry, we dispute, we settle the point, but in the mean time the fire goes out, and must be kindled again. All this is very amusing. I hunt, I bring home the prey, with the skin of it I mend an old coat, or I make a new one. By this time the day is far spent, I feel myself fatigued and retire to rest. Thus what with tilling the ground and

eating the fruit of it, hunting and walking, and running, and mending old clothes, and sleeping and rising again, I can suppose an inhabitant of the primæval world so much occupied, as to sigh over the shortness of life, and to find at the end of many centuries, that they had all slipt through his fingers, and were passed away like a shadow. What wonder then that I, who live in a day of so much greater refinement, when there is so much more to be wanted, and wished, and to be enjoyed, should feel myself now and then pinched in point of opportunity, and at some loss for leisure to fill four sides of a sheet like this? Thus, however, it is, and if the ancient gentlemen to whom I have referred, and their complaints of the disproportion of time to the occasions they had for it, will not serve me as an excuse, I must even plead guilty, and confess that I am often in haste, when I have no good reason for being so.

This by way of introduction, now for my letter. Mr Scott is desired by Mr De Coetlogon to contribute to the Theological Review, of which, I suppose, that gentleman is a manager. He says he has insured your assistance, and at the same time desires mine, either in prose or verse. He did well to apply to you, because you can afford him substantial help, but as for me, had he known me better, he could never have suspected me for a theologian, either in rhyme or otherwise.

Lord Dartmouth's Mr Wright spent near two hours with me this morning, a respectable old man, whom I always see with pleasure, both for his master's sake and for his own. I was glad to learn from him that his lordship has better health than he has enjoyed for some years. Believe me, my dear friend, Your affect onate Wm COWPER

CCLXXIV

BALOONS—COWPER OF OPINION THAT IF THEY SHOULD BE RENDERED AS MANAGEABLE AS EXPECTED, THEY WOULD PROVE THE MEANS OF GREAT EVIL—EAST INDIA BILL.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec. 15, 1783

I KNOW not how it fares with you, at a time when philo-

sophy has just brought forth her most extraordinary production, not excepting, perhaps, that prodigy, a ship, in all respects complete, and equal to the task of circumnavigating the globe. My mind, however, is frequently getting into these balloons, and is busy in multiplying speculations as airy as the regions through which they pass. The last account from France, which seems so well authenticated, has changed my jocularly upon this occasion into serious expectation. The invention of these new vehicles is yet in its infancy, yet already they seem to have attained a degree of perfection which navigation did not reach, till ages of experience had matured it, and science had exhausted both her industry and her skill, in its improvement. I am aware indeed, that the first boat or canoe that was ever formed, though rude in its construction — perhaps not constructed at all, being only hollow tree that had fallen casually in the water, and which, though furnished with neither sails nor oars, might yet be guided by a pole — was a more perfect creature in its kind than a balloon at present, the single circumstance of its manageable nature giving it a clear superiority both in respect of safety and convenience. But the atmosphere, though a much thinner medium, we well know, resists the impression made upon it by the tail of a bird, as effectually as the water that of a ship's rudder. Pope, when inculcating one of his few useful lessons, and directing man kind to the providence of God as the true source of all their wisdom, says beautifully —

*Learn of the little Nautilus to sail,
Spread the thin oar, and catch the driving gale*

It is easy to parody these lines, so as to give them an accommodation and suitableness to the present purpose.

*Learn of the circle making kite to fly,
Spread the fan tail, and wheel about the sky*

It is certain, at least, that nothing within the reach of human ingenuity will be left unattempted to accomplish, and add all that is wanting to this last effort of philosophical contrivance. The approximating powers of the telescope, and the powers by which the thunder-storm is delivered of its contents peaceably and without mischief, were once, perhaps, in appearance more remote from discovery, and

seemed less practicable, than we may now suppose it, to give direction to that which is already buoiant, especially possessed as we are of such consummate mechanical skill, already masters of principles which we have nothing to do but to apply, of which we have already availed ourselves in the similar case of navigation, and having in every fowl of the air a pattern, which now at length it may be sufficient to imitate. Wings and a tail, indeed, were of little use, while the body, so much heavier than the space of air it occupied, was sure to sink by its own weight, and could never be held in equipoise by any implements of the kind which human strength could manage. But now we float, at random, indeed, pretty much, and as the wind drives us, for want of nothing, however, but that steerage which invention, the conqueror of many equal, if not superior difficulties may be expected to supply. Should the point be carried, and man at last become as familiar with the air as he has long been with the ocean, will it in its consequences prove a mercy, or a judgment? I think, a judgment. First, because if a power to convey himself from place to place, like a bird, would have been good for him, his Maker would have formed him with such a capacity. But he has been a groveller upon the earth for six thousand years, and now at last, when the close of this present state of things approaches, begins to exalt himself above it. So much the worse for *him*. Like a truant schoolboy, he breaks his bounds, and will have reason to repent of his presumption. — Secondly, I think it will prove a judgment, because with the exercise of very little foresight, it is easy to prognosticate a thousand evils which the project must necessarily bring after it, amounting at last to the confusion of all order, the annihilation of all authority, with dangers both to property and person, and impunity to the offenders. Were I an absolute legislator, I would therefore make it death for a man to be convicted of flying, the moment he could be caught, and to bring him down from his altitudes by a bullet sent through his head or his carriage, should be no murder. Philosophers would call me a Vandal, the scholar would say that, had it not been for me, the fable of Dædalus would have been realized, and historians would

load my memory with reproaches of phlegm, and stupidity, and oppression, but in the mean time the world would go on quietly, and if it enjoyed less liberty, would at least be more secure

I know not what are your sentiments upon the subject of the East India Bill. This, too, has frequently afforded me matter of speculation. I can easily see that it is not without its blemishes, but its beauties, in my eye, are much predominant. Whatever may be its author's views, if he delivers so large a portion of mankind from such horrible tyranny as the East has suffered, he deserves a statue much more than Mongolfier, who, it seems, is to receive that honour. Perhaps he may bring our own freedom into jeopardy, but to do this for the sake of emancipating nations so much more numerous than ourselves, is at least generous, and a design that should have my encouragement, if I had any encouragement, to afford it.

We are well, and love you. Remember us, as I doubt not you do, with the same affection, and be content with my sentiments upon subjects such as these, till I can send you, if that day should ever come, a letter more worthy of your reception.

Nous sommes les vôtres

GUILLAUME ET MARIE

CCLXXV

**THE GREAT MEN OF THE WORLD OF A PIECE WITH
THE WORLD TO WHICH THEY BELONG—DISMISSAL
OF THE MINISTERS—MR. BACON—MR.
SCOTT'S EXHORTATION TO FREQUENT
PRAYER.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 27, 1783

THANKS to the patriotic junto, whose efforts have starved off the excepted dissolution, franks have not yet lost their currency. Ignorant as they were that my writing by this post depended upon the existence of the present parliament, they have conducted their deliberations with a sturdiness

and magnanimity that would almost tempt one to suppose that they had known it. So true it is, that the actions of men are connected with consequences they are little aware of, and that events, comparatively trivial in themselves, may give birth to the most important.

My thoughts of ministers and men in power are nearly akin to yours. It is well for the public, when the rulers of a state are actuated by principles that may happen to coincide with its interests. The ambition of an individual has often been made subservient to the general good, and many a man has served his country, merely for the sake of immortalizing himself by doing it. So far, it seems to me, the natural man is to be trusted, and no farther. Self is at the bottom of all his conduct. If self can be pleased, flattered, enriched, exalted by his exertions, and his talents or such as qualify him for great usefulness, his country shall be the better for him. And this, perhaps, is all the patriotism we have a right to look for. In the mean time, however, I cannot but think such a man in some degree a respectable character, and am willing, at least, to do him honour, so far as I feel myself benefited by him. Ambition and the love of fame are certainly no Christian principles, but they are such as commonly belong to men of superior minds, and the fruits they produce may often plead their apology. The great men of the world are of a piece with the world to which they belong, they are raised up to govern it, and in the government of it are prompted by worldly motives. But it prospers perhaps, under their management, and when it does, the Christian world, which is totally a distinct creation, partaking of the advantage, has cause to be thankful. The sun is a glorious creature, he does much good, but without intending it. I, however, who am conscious of the good he does, though I know not what religion he is of, or whether he has any or none, rejoice in his effects, admire him and am sensible that it is every man's duty to be thankful for him. In this sentiment I know you agree with me for I believe he has not a warmer votary than yourself.

We say, the king can do wrong, and it is well for poor George the Third that he cannot. In my opinion, however, he has lately been within a hair's-breadth of that predica-

ment. His advisers, indeed, are guilty, and not he : but he will probably find, however hard it may seem, that if he can do no wrong he may yet suffer the consequences of the wrong he cannot do. He has dismissed his servants but not disgraced them, they triumph in their degradation, and no man is willing to supply their places. Must their offices remain unoccupied, or must they be courted to resume them? Never was such a distracted state of things within my remembrance, and I much fear that this is but the beginning of sorrows. It is not a time of day for a king to take liberties with the people, there is a spirit in the Commons that will not endure it, and his Majesty's adviser must be less acquainted with the temper of the times than it is possible to suppose them, if they imagine that such strides of prerogative will not be resented. The address will gall him. I am sorry that he has exposed himself to such a reprehension, but I think it warranted by the occasion. I pity him, but king as he is, and much as I have always honoured him, had I been a member I should have voted for it.

I am obliged to Mr Bacon for thinking of me. The expression, however, does not do justice to my feelings. Even with the little knowledge I have of him, I should love him, had I any reason to suppose myself at any time an object of his attention, but knowing that I am so happy as to have a share in his remembrance, I certainly love him the more. Truly I am not in his debt. I cannot say wherefore it is so, but certainly few days pass in which I do not remember *him*. The print, indeed, with which he favoured me, and which is always in my view, must often suggest the recollection of him, but though I greatly value it, I do not believe it is my only prompter.

I finish with what I wish may make you laugh, as it did me. Mr Scott, exhorting the people to frequent prayer, closed his address thus :—"You have nothing to do but to ask, and you will ever find Him ready to bestow. Open your wide mouths, and he will fill them."

Mrs Unwin is well. Accept an old but a true conclu

tion—our united love to you and yours, and believe me,
my dear friend,

Your ever affectionate

WM. COWPER

CCLXXVI

**DOMESTIC OCCURRENCE—THE DOOR-DOCTOR—
EAST INDIA COMPANY.**

1784.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Jan 3, 1784

YOUR silence began to be distressing both to your mother and me, and had I not received a letter from you last night, I should have written by this post to enquire after your health. How can it be, that you, who are not stationary like me, but often change your situation and mix with a variety of company, should suppose me furnished with such abundant materials, and you yourself destitute? I assure you faithfully, that I do not find the soil of Olney prolific in the growth of such articles as make letter-writing a desirable employment. No place contributes less to the catalogue of incidents, or is more scantily supplied with anecdotes worth notice.

We have

One parson, one poet, one belman, one crier,

And the poor poet is our only 'squire

Guess then if I have not more reason to expect two letters from you, than you one from me. The principal occurrence, and that which affects me most at present, came to pass this moment. The stair-foot door being swelled by the thaw, would do any thing better than it would open. An attempt to force it upon that office has been attended with such a horrible dissolution of its parts, that we were immediately obliged to introduce a chirurgeon, commonly called a carpenter, whose applications we have some hope will cure it of a locked jaw, and heal its numerous fractures. His medicines are powerful chalybeates, and a certain glutinous salve, which he tells me is made of the tails and ears of animals. The consequences however are rather unfavourable to my present employment, which does not well brook noise, bustle, and interruption.

This being the case, I shall not perhaps be either so perspicuous, or so diffuse, on the subject of which you desire my sentiments, as I should be, but I will do my best. Know then that I have learnt long since, of Abbé Raynal, to hate all monopolies, as injurious, howsoever managed, to the interests of commerce at large consequently the charter in question would not at any rate be a favourite of mine. This however is of itself I confess no sufficient reason to justify the resumption of it. But such reasons I think are not winning. A grant of that kind, it is well known, is always forfeited by the non-performance of the conditions. And why not equally forfeited, if those conditions are exceeded, if the design of it be perverted, and its operation extended to objects which were never in the contemplation of the donor? This appears to me to be no misrepresentation of their case, whose charter is supposed to be in danger. It constitutes them a trading company, and gives them an exclusive right to traffic in the East Indies. But it does no more. It invests them with no sovereignty, it does not convey to them the royal prerogative of making war and peace, which the king cannot alienate if he would. But this prerogative they have exercised, and, forgetting the terms of their institution, have possessed themselves of an immense territory, which they have ruled with a rod of iron, to which it is impossible they should ever have a right, unless such a one as it is a disgrace to plead,—the right of conquest. The potentates of this country they dash in pieces like a potter's vessel, as often as they please, making the happiness of thirty millions of mankind a consideration subordinate to that of their own emolument, oppressing them as often as it may serve a lucrative purpose, and in no instance, that I have ever heard, consulting their interest or advantage. That government therefore is bound to interfere, and to unking these tyrants, to me self-evident. And if having subjugated so much of this miserable world, it is therefore necessary that we must keep possession of it, it appears to me a duty so binding upon the legislature to rescue it from the hands of those usurpers, that I should think a curse, and a bitter one, must follow the neglect of it. But suppose this were done,

can they be legally deprived of their charter? In truth I think so. If the abuse and perversion of a charter can amount to a defeasance of it, never were they so grossly palpable as in this instance, never was charter so justly forfeited. Neither am I at all afraid that such a measure should be drawn into a precedent, unless it could be alleged as a sufficient reason for not hanging a rogue, that perhaps magistracy might grow wanton in the exercise of such a power, and now and then hang up an honest man for its amusement. When the governors of the bank shall have deserved the same severity, I hope they will meet with it. In the mean time I do not think them a whit more in jeopardy because a corporation of plunderers have been brought to justice.

We are well, and love you all. I never wrote in such a hurry, nor in such disturbance. Pardon the effects, and believe me yours affectionately,
W C

CCCLXXVII.

**FEELINGS AT THE COMMENCEMENT OF A NEW
YEAR—TREASURE-TROVE.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan 13, 1784

I too have taken leave of the old year, and parted with it just when you did, but with very different sentiments and feelings upon the occasion. I looked back upon all the passages and occurrences of it, as a traveller looks back upon a wilderness, through which he has passed with weariness, and sorrow of heart, reaping no other fruit of his labour, than the poor consolation that, dreary as the desert was, he has left it all behind him. The traveller would find even this comfort considerably lessened, if, as soon as he had passed one wilderness, another of equal length, and equally desolate, should expect him. In this particular, his experience and mine would exactly tally. I should rejoice indeed that the old year is over and gone, if I had not every reason to prophesy a new one similar to it.

The new year is already old in my account. I am not, indeed, sufficiently second-sighted to be able to boast by anticipation an acquaintance with the events of it yet unborn, but rest convinced that, be they what they may, not one of them comes a messenger of good to me. If even death itself should be of the number, he is no friend of mine. It is an alleviation of the woes even of an unenlightened man, that he can wish for death, and indulge a hope, at least, that in death he shall find deliverance. But, loaded as my life is with despair, I have no such comfort as would result from a supposed probability of better things to come, were it once ended. For, more unhappy than the traveller with whom I set out, pass through what difficulties I may, through whatever dangers and afflictions, I am not a whit the nearer home, unless a dung-con may be called so. This is no very agreeable theme, but in so great a dearth of subjects to write upon, and especially impressed as I am at this moment with a sense of my own condition, I could choose no other. The weather is an exact emblem of my mind in its present state. A thick fog envelopes every thing, and at the same time it freezes intensely. You will tell me that this cold gloom will be succeeded by a cheerful spring, and endeavour to encourage me to hope for a spiritual change resembling it, — but it will be lost labour. Nature revives again, but a soul once slain lives no more. The hedge that has been apparently dead, is not so, it will burst into leaf and blossom at the appointed time, but no such time is appointed for the stake that stands in it. It is as dead as it seems, and will prove itself no dissembler. The latter end of next month will complete *a period of eleven years in which I have spoken no other language*. It is a long time for a man, whose eyes were once opened, to spend in darkness, long enough to make despair an inveterate habit, and such it is in me. My friends, I know, expect that I shall see yet again. They think it necessary to the existence of divine truth, that he who once had possession of it should never finally lose it. I admit the solidity of this reasoning in every case but my own. And why not in my own? For causes which to

them it appears madness to allege, but which rest upon my mind with a weight of unmoveable conviction. If I am recoverable, why am I thus? why crippled and made useless in the church, just at that time of life, when, my judgment and experience being matured, I might be most useful? why cashiered and turned out of service, till, according to the course of nature, there is not life enough left in me to make amends for the years I have lost,—till there is no reasonable hope left that the fruit can ever pay the expense of the fallow? I forestall the answer—God's ways are mysterious, and he giveth no account of his matters—an answer that would serve my purpose as well as theirs that use it. There is no mystery in my destruction, and in time it shall be explained.

I am glad you have found so much hidden treasure, and Mrs Unwin desires me to tell you that you did her no more than justice, in believing that she would rejoice in it. It is not easy to surmise the reason, why the reverend doctor, your predecessor, concealed it. Being a subject of a free government, and I suppose full of the divinity most in fashion, he could not bear lest his great riches should expose him to persecution. Nor can I suppose that he held it any disgrace for a dignitary of the church to be wealthy, at a time when churchmen in general spare no pains to become so. But the wisdom of some men has a droll sort of knavishness in it, much like that of a magpie, who hides what he finds with a deal of contrivance, merely for the pleasure of doing it.

Mrs Unwin is tolerably well. She wishes me to add that she shall be obliged to Mrs Newton, if, when an opportunity offers, she will give the worsted-merchant a jog. We congratulate you that Eliza does not grow worse, which I know you expected would be the case in the course of the winter. Present our love to her. Remember us to Sally Johnson, and assure yourself that we remain as warmly as ever

Yours, W C AND M U

CCLXXVIII.

EAST INDIA COMPANY

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jan 25, 1784

THIS contention about East Indian patronage seems not unlikely to avenge upon us, by its consequences, the mischiefs we have done there. The matter in dispute is too precious to be relinquished by either party, and each is jealous of the influence the other would derive from the possession of it. In a country whose politics have so long rolled upon the wheels of corruption, an affair of such value must prove a weight in either scale absolutely destructive of the very idea of a balance. Every man has his sentiments upon this subject, and I have mine. Were I constituted umpire of this strife, with full powers to decide it, I would tie a talent of lead about the neck of this patronage, and plunge it into the depths of the sea. To speak less figuratively, I would abandon all territorial interest in a country to which we can have no right, and which we cannot govern with any security to the happiness of the inhabitants, or without the danger of incurring either perpetual broils, or the most insupportable tyranny at home — that sort of tyranny, I mean, which flatters and tantalizes the subject with a show of freedom, and in reality allows him nothing more, bribing to the right and left, rich enough to afford the purchase of a thousand consciences, and consequently strong enough, if it happen to meet with an incorruptible one, to render all the efforts of that man, or of twenty such men, if they could be found, romantic, and of no effect. I am the king's most loyal subject, and most obedient humble servant. But by his majesty's leave, I must acknowledge I am not altogether convinced of the rectitude even of his own measures, or the simplicity of his views, and if I were satisfied that he himself is to be trusted, it is nevertheless palpable, that he cannot answer for his successors. At the same time he is my king, and I reverence him as such. I account his prerogative sacred and shall ever wish prosperity to a party that invades it, and that under the pretence of patriotism would annihilate all the consequence of a character essential to the very being

of the constitution For these reasons I am sorry that we have any dominion in the East,—that we have any such emoluments to contend about Their immense value will probably prolong the dispute, and such struggles having been already made in the conduct of it, as have shaken our very foundations, it seems not unreasonable to suppose that still greater efforts and more fatal, are behind, and after all, the decision in favour of either side may be ruinous to the whole In the mean time, that the Company themselves are but indifferently qualified for the kingship, is most deplorably evident What shall I say therefore? I distrust the court, I suspect the patriots, I put the Company entirely aside, as having forfeited all claim to confidence in such a business, and see no remedy of course, but in the annihilation, if that could be accomplished, of the very existence of our authority in the East Indies

Unwin has lost a cousin, and found a thousand pounds she died worth sixty thousand, but left most of her fortune to poor relations, some of whom she has probably ruined by her kindness Accept your best love to yourself and household Mary Bell is dead and buried The small-pox is in Dog Lane no other news.

Yours, my dear friend, most truly, W C

CCCLXXIX

SUGGESTING A TITLE AND MOTTO FOR A BOOK OF MR. NEWTON'S, AND DECLINING TO CON- TRIBUTE VERSES TO THE MANAGER OF A CERTAIN JOURNAL.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 1784

I am glad that you have finished a work, of which I well remember the beginning, and which I was sorry you thought it expedient to discontinue Your reason for not proceeding was however such as I was obliged to acquiesce in, being suggested by a jealousy you felt, "lest your spirit should be betrayed into acrimony, in writing upon such a subject" I doubt not you have sufficiently guarded that point, and indeed, at the time I could not discover that you had failed

in it I have busied myself this morning in contriving a Greek title, and in seeking a motto The motto you mention is certainly apposite But I think it an objection, that it has been so much in use, almost every writer, that has claimed a liberty to think for himself upon whatever subject, having chosen it I therefore send you one, which I never saw in that shape yet, and which appears to me equally apt and proper The Greek word, *deunos*, which signifies literally a shackle, may figuratively serve to express those chains which bigotry and prejudice cast upon the mind It seems, therefore, to speak like a lawyer, no manner of your book, to call it

Μυωδὸν βίβλος

The following pleases me most of all the mottoes I have thought of But with respect both to that and the title you will use your pleasure

Querelis

Haud justis assurgis, et irrita jurgia jactas

En x 94

From the little I have seen, and the much I have heard of the manager of the Review you mention, I cannot feel even the smallest push of a desire to serve him in the capacity of poet Indeed I dislike him so much, that, had I a drawer full of pieces fit for his purpose, I hardly think I should contribute to his collection It is possible too, that I may live to be once more a publisher myself, in which case, I should be glad to find myself in possession of any such original pieces, as might decently make their appearance in a volume of my own At present however I have nothing that would be of use to him, nor have I many opportunities of composing, Sunday being the only day in the week which we spend alone

I am at this moment pinched for time, but was desirous of proving to you, with what alacrity my Greek and Latin memory are always ready to obey you, and therefore by the first post have to the best of my ability complied with your request

Believe me, my dear friend, *

Affectionately yours, W C

CCI.XXX

**COMPARISON BETWEEN HIMSELF AND HIS PICTISH
ANCESTORS DREAM OF ADAM.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 10, 1744

THE morning is my writing time, and in the morning I have no spirits. So much the worse for my correspondents. Sleep, that refreshes my body, seems to cripple me in every other respect. As the evening approaches, I grow more alert, and when I am retiring to bed, am more fit for mental occupation than at any other time. So it tires with us whom they call nervous. By a strange inversion of the animal economy, we are ready to sleep when we have most need to be awake, and go to bed just when we might sit up to some purpose. The watch is irregularly wound up, it goes in the night when it is not wanted, and in the day stands still. In many respects we have the advantage of our forefathers the Picts. We sleep in a whole skin and are not obliged to submit to the painful operation of puncturing ourselves from head to foot, in order that we may be decently dressed, and fit to appear abroad. But on the other hand, we have reason enough to envy them their tone of nerves, and that flow of spirits which effectually secured them from all uncomfortable impressions of a gloomy atmosphere, and from every shade of melancholy from every other cause. They understood, I suppose, the use of vulnerary herbs, having frequent occasion for some skill in surgery; but physicians, I presume they had none, having no need of any. Is it possible, that a creature like myself can be descended from such progenitors, in whom there appears not a single trace of family resemblance? What an alteration have a few ages made? They, without clothing, would defy the severest season, and I, with all the accommodation that art has since invented, am hardly secure even in the mildest. If the wind blows upon me when my pores are open, I catch cold. A cough is the consequence. I suppose if such a disorder could have seized a Pict, his friends would have concluded that a bone had stuck in his throat, and that he was in some

danger of choking. They would perhaps have addressed themselves to the cure of his cough by thrusting their fingers into his gullet, which would only have exasperated the case. But they would never have thought of administering laudanum, my only remedy. For this difference, however, that has obtained between me and my ancestors, I am indebted to the luxurious practices, and enfeebling self-indulgence, of a long line of grandsires, who from generation to generation have been employed in deteriorating the breed, till at last the collected effects of all their follies have centred in my puny self,—a man indeed, but not in the image of those that went before me,—a man, who sighs and groans, who wears out life in dejection and oppression of spirits, and who never thinks of the aborigines of the country to which he belongs, without wishing that he had been born among them. The evil is without a remedy, unless the ages that are passed could be recalled, my whole pedigree be permitted to live again, and being properly admonished to beware of enervating sloth and refinement, would preserve their hardness of nature unimpaired, and transmit the desirable quality to their posterity. I once saw Adam in a dream. We sometimes say of a picture, that we doubt not its likeness to the original, though we never saw him, a judgment we have some reason to form, when the face is strongly charactered, and the features full of expression. So I think of my visionary Adam, and for a similar reason. His figure was awkward indeed in the extreme. It was evident that he had never been taught by a Frenchman to hold his head erect, or to turn out his toes, to dispose gracefully of his arms, or to simper without a meaning. But if Mr. Bacon was called upon to produce a statue of Hercules, he need not wish for a juster pattern. He stood like a rock, the size of limbs, the prominence of his muscles, and the height of his stature, all conspired to bespeak him a creature whose strength had suffered no diminution, and who, being the first of his race, did not come into the world under a necessity of sustaining a load of infirmities, derived to him from the intemperance of others. He was as much stouter than a Pict, as I suppose a Pict to have been than I. Upon my hypo-

thesis, therefore, there has been a gradual declension, in point of bodily vigour, from Adam down to me at least if my dream were a just representation of that gentleman, and deserve the credit I cannot help giving it, such must have been the case

Yours my dear friend, W C

CCLXXI

HARD WINTER—PROGRESS OF THE TASK

TO THE REV WILLIAM BULL

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 22, 1784

I CONGRATULATE you on the thaw, I suppose it is an universal blessing, and probably felt all over Europe. I myself am the better for it, who wanted nothing that might make the frost supportable, what reason therefore have they to rejoice, who, being in want of all things, were exposed to its utmost rigour? The ice in my ink, however, is not yet dissolved. It was long before the frost seized it, but at last it prevailed. The *Sofa* has consequently received little or no addition since. It consists at present of four books and a part of a fifth, when the sixth is finished, the work is accomplished, but if I may judge by my present inability, that period is at a considerable distance.

I owe you thanks for your kind remembrance of me in your letter sent me on occasion of your departure, and as many for that which I received last night. I should have answered, had I known where a line or two from me might find you, but uncertain whether you were at home or abroad, my diligence, I confess, wanted the necessary spur.

It makes a capital figure among the comforts we enjoyed during the long severity of the season, that the same *monarch* to all except ourselves, made us his almoners. This year likewise, as he did the last, and to the same amount. So we have been enabled, I suppose, to save from perishing, and certainly many from the most pinching necessity.

Are you not afraid, Tory, as you are, to avow your principles to me, who am a Whig? Know that I am in the opposition—that though, I pity the King, I do not wish him success in the present contest. But this is too long a battle

to fight upon paper Make haste, that we may decide it
face to face

Our respects what upon Mrs Bull, and our love upon
the young Hebræan I wish you joy of his proficiency, and
am glad that you can say, with the old man in Terence,—

omnes omnia
Bona dicere, et laudare fortunas meas,
Qui gnatum haberem tali ingenio præditi

Yours, W. C.

—
CClXXXII.

**COWPER'S POLITICS TAKEN FROM THE NEWS-
PAPERS—DEFENCE OF THE COALITION—UNFA-
VOURABLE OPINION OF MR. PITT—PROPOSES TO
TRANSLATE A WORK OF CARACCIOLI FOR THE
THEOLOGICAL MISCELLANY**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

February 1784.

I give you joy of a thaw, that has put an end to a frost
of nine weeks continuance with very little interruption, the
longest that has happened since the year 1739. May I
presume that you feel yourself indebted to me for intelli-
gence, which perhaps no other of your correspondents will
vouchsafe to communicate, though they are as well appriz-
ed of it, and as much convinced of the truth of it, as my-
self? It is, I suppose, every where felt as a blessing, but
no where more sensibly than at Olney, though even at
Olney the severity of it has been alleviated in behalf of
many. The same benefactor, who befriended them last
year, has with equal liberality administered a supply to
their necessities in the present. Like the subterraneous fluid
that warms my myrtles, he does good, and is unseen. His
injunctions of secrecy are still as rigorous as ever, and must
therefore be observed with the same attention. He, however,
is a happy man, whose philanthropy is not like mine, an
impotent principle, spending itself in fruitless wishes. At
the same time, I confess it is a consolation, and I feel it an
honour, to be employed as the conductor, and to be trusted
as the dispenser of another man's bounty. Some have been

saved from perishing, and all, that could partake of it, from the most pitiable distress.

I will not apologize for my politics, or suspect them of error, merely because they are taken up from the newspapers. I take it for granted, that those reporters of the wisdom of our representatives are tolerably correct and faithful. Were they not, and were they guilty of frequent and gross misrepresentation, assuredly they would be chastised by the rod of parliamentary criticism. Could I be present at the debates, I should indeed have a better opinion of my documents. But if the House of Commons be the best school of British politics, which I think an undeniable assertion, then he that reads what passes there has opportunities of information, inferior only to theirs who hear for themselves, and can be present upon the spot. Thus qualified, I take courage, and when a certain reverend neighbour of ours curls his nose at me, and holds my opinions cheap, merely because he has passed through London, in his way to Wiltshire, I am not altogether convinced that he has reason on his side. I do not know that the air of the metropolis has a power to brighten the intellects, or that to sleep a night in the great city is a necessary cause of wisdom. He tells me that Mr. Fox is a rascal, and that Lord North is a villain, that every creature execrates them both, and that I ought to do so too. But I beg to be excused. Villain and rascal are appellations which we, who do not converse with great men, are rather sparing in the use of. Neither can I persuade myself that because one of them has frequented the gaming table, and the other, after having been at the head of the court party, has associated with him, they are therefore traitors to their country, and fit only to be hanged. I can conceive them both to be most entirely persuaded of the rectitude of their conduct, and the rather, because I feel myself much inclined to believe that, being so, they are not mistaken. I cannot think that secret influence is a bugbear, a phantom conjured up to serve a purpose, the mere *chibboleth* of a party. Stuartism, in my mind, has been the characteristic of the present reign, and being, and having always been somewhat of an enthusiast on the subject of British liberty,

I am not able to withhold my reverence and good wishes from the man, whoever he be, that exerts himself in a constitutional way to oppose it. The son of Lord Chatham seems to me to have abandoned his father's principles. I admire neither his measures nor his temper, but very much admire the forbearance and lenity with which he is treated, and that consideration of his youth which men of equal ability, to say the least and certainly of much greater experience, vouchsafe to show him. His obstinate continuance in office, with no better reason for it than an imaginary point of honour, is without example. It is *like* a young man either intoxicated with power or impunity, and at all hazards, executing the dictates of men more subtle and able than himself. I fear much that he is the tool of mischievous purposes, and that his unrelaxing steadiness, too much resembling that of a certain personage, will bring down a storm upon himself and upon the nation.

Crucian upon the subject of self-acquittance was never, I believe translated. I have sometimes thought that the Theological Miscellany might be glad of a chapter of it monthly. It is a work which I much admire. You, who are master of their plan can tell me whether such a contribution would be welcome. If you think it would, I would be punctual in my remittances, and a labour of that sort would suit me better in my present state of mind than original composition on religious subjects.

Remember us as those that love you and are never unmindful of you

Yours, my dear friend, W. C.

CCCLXXXIII

LORD PETRE—HIS EMBARRASSMENT IN WRIT- ING TO A STRANGER—POLITICAL FEARS

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb. 29, 1784

We are glad that you have such a Lord Petre in your neighbourhood. He must be a man of a liberal turn, to employ a heretic in such a service. I wish you a further

acquaintance with him, not doubting that the more he knows you he will find you the more agreeable. You despair of becoming a prebendary for want of certain rhythmical talents, which you suppose me possessed of. But what think you of a cardinal's hat? Perhaps his lordship may have interest at Rome, and that greater honour may await you. Seriously, however, I respect his character, and should not be sorry if there were many such Papists in the land.

Mr Smith has given free scope to his generosity, and contributed as largely to the relief of Olney, as he did last year. Soon after I had given you notice of his first remittance, we received a second to the same amount accompanied indeed with an intimation that we were to consider it as an anticipated supply, which, but for the uncommon severity of the present winter, he should have reserved for the next. The inference is, that next winter we are to expect nothing. But the man and his beneficent turn of mind considered, there is some reason to suppose that, logical as the inference seems, it may yet be disappointed.

Adverting to your letter again, I perceive that you wish for my opinion of your answer to his lordship. Had I forgotten to tell you that I approve of it, I know you well enough to be aware of the misinterpretation you would have put upon my silence. I am glad therefore that I happened to cast my eye upon your appeal to my opinion, before it was too late. A modest man, however able, has always some reason to distrust himself upon extraordinary occasions. Nothing is so apt to betray us into absurdity, as too great a dread of it, and the application of more strength than enough is sometimes as fatal as too little; but you have escaped very well, considering that you were addressing yourself to a lord, that a lord is a creature you do not every day converse with. For my own part, when I write to a stranger, I feel myself deprived of half my intellects. I suspect that I shall write nonsense, and I do so. I tremble at the thought of an inaccuracy, and become absolutely ungrammatical. I feel myself sweat. I have recourse to the knife and the pounce. I correct half a dozen blunders, which in a common case I could not have committed, and have no sooner dispatched what I have written, than I recollect how much better I

could have made it, how easily and genteelly I could have relaxed the stiffness of the phrase, and have cured the insufferable awkwardness of the whole, had they struck me a little earlier. Thus we stand in awe of we know not what and miscarry through mere desire to excel.

I read Johnson's Prefaces every night, except when the newspaper calls me off. At a time like the present, what author can stand in competition with a newspaper? or who, that has a spark of patriotism, does not point all his attention to the present crisis? The consequences that I expect will follow our commotions are too terrible to be mentioned. They will proclaim *themselves* soon, if I have any skill in political speculation.

The sturgeon was excellent

W C

I am so disgusted with——, for allowing himself to be silent, when so loudly called upon to write to you, that I do not choose to express my feelings. Woe to the man whom kindness cannot soften!

CCLXXXIV

ON THE LIVES OF POETS, COMMISSION FOR HATS.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

March 21, 1784

I THANK you for the entertainment you have afforded me. I often wish for a library, often regret my folly in selling good collection, but I have one in Essex. It is rather remote, indeed, too distant for occasional reference, but serves the purpose of amusement, and a waggon being very suitable vehicle for an author, I find myself commodiously supplied. Last night I made an end of reading Johnson's Prefaces, but the number of poets whom he has vouchsafed to chronicle being fifty-six, there must be many with whose history I am not yet acquainted. These, some of these, if it suits you to give them a part of your chaise, when you come, will be heartily welcome. I am very much the biographer's humble admirer. His uncommon snare of good sense, and his forcible expression, secure

to him that tribute from all his readers. He has a penetrating insight into character, and a happy talent of correcting the popular opinion, upon all occasions where it is erroneous, and this he does with the boldness of a man who will think for himself, but, at the same time, with a justness of sentiment that convinces us he does not differ from others through affectation, but because he has a sounder judgment. This remark, however, has his narrative for its object, rather than his critical performance. In the latter, I do not think him always just, when he departs from the general opinion. He finds no beauties in Milton's *Lycidas*. He pours contempt upon Prior, to such a degree, that were he really as undeserving of notice as he represents him, he ought no longer to be numbered among the poets. These, indeed, are the two capital instances in which he has offended me. There are others less important, which I have not room to enumerate, and in which I am less confident that he is wrong. What suggested to him the thought that the *Alma* was written in imitation of *Hudibras*, I cannot conceive. In former years, they were both favourites of mine, and I often read them, but never saw in them the least resemblance to each other, nor do I now, except that they are composed in verse of the same measure. After all, it is a melancholy observation, which it is impossible not to make, after having run through this series of poetical lives, that where there were such shining talents, there should be so little virtue. These luminaries of our country seem to have been kindled into a brighter blaze than others, only that their spots might be more noticed! So much can nature do for our intellectual part, and so little for our moral. What vanity, what petulance in Pope! How painfully sensible of censure, and yet how restless in provocation! To what mean artifices could Addison stoop, in hopes of injuring the reputation of his friend! Savage, how sordidly vicious, and the more condemned for the pains that are taken to palliate his vices. Offensive as they appear through a veil, how would they disgust without one. What a sycophant to the public taste was Dryden, sinning against his feelings, lewd in his writings, though chaste in his conversation. I know not but one might search these eight volumes with a candle, as the

prophet says, to find a man, and not find one, unless, perhaps, Arbuthnot were he

I shall begin Beattie this evening, and propose to myself much satisfaction in reading him. In him, at least, I shall find a man whose faculties have now and then a glimpse from Heaven upon them,—a man, not indeed in possession of much evangelical light, but faithful to what he has, and never neglecting an opportunity to use it. How much more respectable such a character, than that of thousands who would call him blind, and yet have not the grace to practise half his virtues! He, too, is a poet, and wrote the *Mimstrel*. The specimens which I have seen of it pleased me much. If you have the whole, I should be glad to read it. I may, perhaps, since you allow me the liberty, indulge myself here and there with a marginal annotation, but shall not use that allowance wantonly, so as to deface the volumes.

Your mother wishes you to buy for her ten yards and a half of yard-wide Irish, from two shillings to two shillings and six pence per yard; and my head will be equally obliged to you for a hat, of which I enclose a string that gives you the circumference. The depth of the crown must be four inches and one-eighth. Let it not be a round slouch, which I abhor, but a smart well-cocked fashionable affair. A fashionable hat likewise for your mother, a black one if they are worn, otherwise chip. Yours, my dear William

W C

CCLXXXV. X

**VISIT FROM A CANDIDATE MR. SCOTT'S
PREACHING.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 29, 1784

It being his majesty's pleasure that I should yet have another opportunity to write before he dissolves the parliament, I avail myself of it with all possible alacrity. I thank you for your last, which was not the less welcome for coming, like an extraordinary gazette, at a time when it was not expected.

As when the sea is uncommonly agitated, the water finds its way into creeks and holds of rocks, which in its calmer state it never reaches, in like manner the effect of these turbulent times as felt even at Orchard side, where in general we live as undisturbed by the political element, as shrimp or cockles that have been accidentally deposited in some hollow beyond the water mark, by the usual dashing of the waves. We were sitting yesterday after dinner, the two ladies and myself, very composedly, and without the least apprehension of any such intrusion in our snug parlour, one lady knitting, the other netting, and the gentleman winding worsted, when to our unspeakable surprise a mob appeared before the window, a smart rap was heard at the door, the boys halloo'd, and the maid announced Mr Grenville. Puss was unfortunately let out of her box, so that the candidate, with all his good friends at his heels, was refused admittance at the grand entry, and referred to the back door, as the only possible way of approach.

Candidates are creatures not very susceptible of affronts, and would rather, I suppose, climb in at a window, than be absolutely excluded. In a minute, the yard, the kitchen, and the parlour, were filled. Mr Grenville, advancing toward me, shook me by the hand with a degree of cordiality that was extremely seducing. As soon as he and as many more as could find chairs were seated, he began to open the subject of his visit. I told him I had no vote, for which he readily gave me credit. I assured him I had no influence, which he was not equally inclined to believe, and the less, no doubt, because Mr Ashburner, the draper, addressing himself to me at this moment, informed me that I had a great deal. Supposing that I could not be possessed of such a treasure without knowing it, I ventured to confirm my first assertion, by saying, that if I had any I was utterly at a loss to imagine where it could be, or wherein it consisted. Thus ended the conference. Mr Grenville squeezed me by the hand again, kissed the ladies, and withdrew. He kissed likewise the maid in the kitchen, and seemed upon the whole a most loving, kissing, kindhearted gentleman. He is very young, genteel, and handsome. He has a pair of very good eye in his head, which not being sufficient as it should seem for the

many nice and difficult purposes of a senator, he has a third also, which he wore suspended by a ribband from his buttonhole. The boys halloo'd, the dogs barked, Puss scampered, the hero, with his long train of obsequious followers, withdrew. We made ourselves very merry with the adventure, and in a short time settled into our former tranquillity, never probably to be thus interrupted more. I thought myself, however, happy in being able to affirm truly that I had not that influence for which he sued; and which, had I been possessed of it, with my present views of the dispute between the Crown and the Commons, I must have refused him, for he is on the side of the former. It is comfortable to be of no consequence in a world where one cannot exercise any without disobliging somebody. The town, however, seems to be much at his service, and if he be equally successful throughout the county, he will undoubtedly gain his election. Mr Ashburner perhaps was a little mortified, because it was evident that I owed the honour of this visit to his misrepresentation of my importance. But had he thought proper to assure Mr. Grenville that I had three heads, I should not I suppose have been bound to produce them.

Mr Scott, who you say was so much admired in your pulpit, would be equally admired in his own, at least by all capable judges, were he not so apt to be angry with his congregation. This hurts him, and had he the understanding and eloquence of Paul himself, would still hurt him. He seldom, hardly, ever indeed, preaches a gentle, well-tempered sermon, but I hear it highly commended for warmth of temper, indulged to a degree that may be called scolding, defeats the end of preaching. It is a misapplication of his powers, which it also cripples, and tears away his hearers. But he is a good man, and may perhaps outgrow it.

Many thanks for the worsted, which is excellent. We are as well as a spring hardly less severe than the severest winter, will give us leave to be. With our united love, we conclude ourselves yours and Mrs. Newton's affectionate and faithful

W C

M U.

not that Adam on the very day of his creation was able to express himself in terms both forcible and elegant, and that he was at no loss for sublime diction, and logical combination, when he wanted to praise his Maker

Yours, my dear friend,

W C

CCLXXXVI

**BLAIR SHOWN TO HAVE CENSURED AS A FAULT
IN VIRGIL WHAT IN REALITY IS A BEAUTY.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

April 23, 1784

I wish I had both burning words, and bright thoughts, but have at present neither. My head is not itself. Having had an unpleasant night, and a melancholy day, and having already written a long letter, I do not find myself in point of spirits at all qualified either to burn or shine. The post sets out early on Tuesday. The morning is the only time of exercise with me. In order therefore to keep it open for that purpose, and to comply with your desire of an immediate answer, I give to you as much as I can spare of the present evening. I have also been ill with a rheumatism in my back, which though in a great measure removed, has left an aching sensation behind it, which my present occupation makes me feel more sensibly. Do not imagine that I have a design to enhance the merit of my punctuality by an enumeration of the difficulties under which I observe it. I mean no more than an apology for sending you a sheet, which, when it arrives, you will not find it worthy of your perusal.

Since I despatched my last, Blair has crept a little further into my favour. As his subjects improve, he improves with them, but upon the whole I account him a dry writer, useful no doubt as an instructor, but as little entertaining as with so much knowledge it is possible to be. His language is, (except Swift's,) the least figurative I remember to have seen, and the few figures found in it are not always happily employed. I take him to be a critic very little animated by what he reads, who rather reasons about the beauties of an author, than really tastes them, and who finds that a passage is praise-worthy, not because it charms

him, but because it is accommodated to the laws of criticism in that case made and provided. I have a little complied with your desire of marginal annotations, and should have dealt in them more largely, had I read the books to myself, but being reader to the ladies, I have not always time to settle my own opinion of a doubtful expression, much less to suggest an emendation. I have not censured a particular observation in the book, though when I met with it, it displeased me. I this moment recollect it, and may as well therefore note it here. He is commending, and deservedly, that most noble description of a thunder-storm in the first Georgic, which ends with

Ingemnant auri, et densissimus imber

Being in haste, I do not refer to the volume for his very words, but my memory will serve me with the matter. When poets describe, he says, they should always select such circumstances of the subject as are least obvious, and consequently most striking. He therefore admires the effect of the thunder-bolt splitting mountains, and filling a nation with astonishment, but quarrels with the closing member of the period, as containing particulars of a storm not worthy of Virgil's notice, because obvious to the notice of all. But here I differ from him, not being able to conceive that wind and rain can be improper in the description of a tempest, or how wind and rain could possibly be more poetically described. Virgil is indeed remarkable for finishing his periods well, and never comes to a stop but with the most consummate dignity of numbers and expression; and in the instance in question I think his skill in this respect is remarkably displayed. The line is perfectly majestic in its march. As to the wind, it is such as only the word *ingemnant* could describe, and the words *densissimus imber* give one an idea of a shower indeed, but of such a shower as is not very common, and such a one as only Virgil could have done justice to by a single epithet. Far therefore from agreeing with the Doctor in his stricture, I do not think the *Aeneid* contains a nobler line, or a description more magnificently finished.

We are glad that Dr Conyers has singled you out upon this occasion. Your performance we doubt not will justify

his choice fear not,—you have a heart that can feel upon charitable occasions, and that therefore will not fail you upon this. The burning words come always fast enough, when the sensibility is such as yours.

Thanks for the fish, with its companion a lobster, which we mean to eat to-morrow. We want four Chinese tooth-brushes, they cost a shilling each, the harder the better. Thanks also for the hat, which is greatly admired, and for the Minstrel, which I dare say I shall admire no less. Beattie is become my favourite author of all the moderns, he is so amiable, I long to know him.

Yours, my dear friend, W C

CCLXXXVII

**TROUBLED WITH RHEUMATISM—REMARKS ON
BEATTIE AND BLAIR—ELECTIONEERING RIOTS**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 26, 1784

We are truly sorry that you have been indisposed. It is well however to have passed through such a season and to have fared no worse. A cold and a sore-throat are troublesome things, but in general an ague is more troublesome, and in this part of the world few have escaped one. I have lately been an invalid myself, and have just recovered from a rheumatic pain in my back, the most excruciating of the sort I ever felt. There was talk of bleeding and blistering, but I escaped with only an embrocation and a box of pills. Mr Grindon attended me, who, though he fidgets about the world as usual, is, I think, a dying man, having had some time since a stroke of apoplexy, and lately a paralytic one. His loss will be felt in this country, though I do not think him absolutely an *Æsculapius*, I believe him to be as skilful as most of his fraternity in the neighbourhood, besides which, he has the merit of being extremely cautious, a very necessary quality in a practitioner upon the constitutions of others.

We are glad that your book runs. It will not indeed satisfy those whom nothing could satisfy but your accession to their party, but the liberal will say you do well,

and it is in the opinion of such men only that you can feel yourself interested

I have lately been employed in reading Beattie and Blair's Lectures. The latter I have not yet finished, I find the former the most agreeable of the two, indeed the most entertaining writer upon dry subjects that I ever met with. His imagination is highly poetical, his language easy and elegant, and his manner so familiar that we seem to be conversing with an old friend, upon terms of the most sociable intercourse, while we read him. Blair is on the contrary rather stiff, not that his style is pedantic, but his is formal. He is a sensible man, and understands his subjects, but too conscious that he is addressing the public and too solicitous about his success, to indulge himself for a moment in that play of fancy which makes the other so agreeable. In Blair we find a scholar, in Beattie both a scholar and an amiable man indeed so amiable, that I have wished for his acquaintance ever since I read his book. Having never in my life perused a page of Aristotle, I am glad to have had an opportunity of learning more than (I suppose) he would have taught me, from the writings of two modern critics. I felt myself too a little disposed to compliment my own acumen upon the occasion. For though the art of writing and composing was never much my study, I did not find that they had any great secrets to tell me. They have assisted me in putting my own observations into some method, but have not suggested many, of which I was not by some means altogether previously apprized. In fact, critics did not originate correct authors, but authors made critics. Common sense dictated to writers the necessity of method, connexion, and thoughts congruous to the nature of their subject. Then prompted them with embellishments, and then came critics. Observing the good effects of an attention to these items, they enacted laws for the observance of them in time to come and having drawn their rules for good writing from what was actually well written, boasted themselves the inventors of an art which yet the authors of the day were already exemplified. They are however useful in that way giving us at one view a map of the boundaries which

propriety sets to fancy, and serving as judges, to whom the public may at once appeal, when pestered with the vagaries of those who have had the hardiness to transgress them

The candidates for this county have set an example of economy, which other candidates would do well to follow, having come to an agreement no both sides to defray the expenses of their voters, but to open no houses for the entertainment of the rabble, a reform however which the rabble did not at all approve of, and testified their dislike of it by a riot. A stage was built, from which the orators had designed to harangue the electors. This became the first victim of their fury. Having very little curiosity to hear what gentlemen could say who would give them nothing better than words, they broke it in pieces, and threw the fragments upon the hustings. The sheriff, the members, the lawyers, the voters, were instantly put to flight. They rallied, but were again routed by a second assault, like the former. They then proceeded to break the windows of the inn to which they had fled, and a fear prevailing that at night they would fire the town, a proposal was made by the freeholders to face about and endeavour to secure them. At that instant a rioter, dressed in a merry andrew's jacket, stepped forward, and challenged the best man among them. Olney sent the hero to the field, who made him repent of his presumption. Mr Ashburne, seizing him by the throat, he shook him down, and threw him to the earth, he made the hollowness of his skull resound by the application of his fists, and dragged him into custody without the least damage to his person. Imitated by this example, the other freeholders followed, and in five minutes twenty eight out of thirty ragamuffins were stich lodged in goal.

Adieu, my dear friend, writing makes me back to the end of a paper's full

Yours ever your

A. AND. M.

CCLXXXVIII.

**JOHN GILPIN ; A SEQUEL NOT TO BE DESIRED -
OBJECTIONS TO PUBLISHING IT WITH THE
TASK-SCHOOLS.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

May 8, 1784

WHEN our correspondents send us money, I always hold them entitled to an immediate answer, accordingly, though since the arrival of yours, I have only had time to run through the newspaper, I am now with pen in hand, upon the point of informing you that your letter, together with its contents, is at this moment safe at Olney

You do well to make your letters merry ones, though not very merry yourself, and that both for my sake and your own, for your own sake, because it sometimes happens, that by assuming an air of cheerfulness we become cheerful in reality, and for mine, because I have always more need of a laugh than a cry, being somewhat disposed to melancholy by natural temperament, as well as by other causes

It was long since, and even in the infancy of John Gilpin, recommended to me by a lady now at Bristol, to write a sequel. But having always observed that authors, elated with the success of a first part, have fallen below themselves when they have attempted a second, I had more prudence than to take her counsel. I want you to read the history of that hero, published by Bladon, and to tell me what it is made of. But buy it not, for, puffed as it is in the papers, it can be but a bookseller's job, and must be dear at the price of two shillings. In the last packet but one that I received from Johnson, he asked me if I had any improvements of John Gilpin in hand, or if I designed any, for that to print only the original again would be to publish what has been hacknied in every magazine, in every newspaper, and in every street. I answered, that the copy which I sent him contained two or three small variations from the first, except which I had none to propose, and that if he thought him now too trite, to make a part of my volume, I should willingly acquiesce in his judgment. I

take it for granted therefore that he will not bring up the rear of my Poems according to my first intention, and shall not be sorry for the omission. It may spring from a principle of pride, but spring it from what it may, I feel, and have long felt, a disinclination to a public avowal that he is mine, and since he became so popular, I have felt it more than ever, not that I should have expressed a scruple, if Johnson had not. But a fear has suggested itself to me, that I might expose myself to a charge of vanity by admitting him into my book, and that some people would impute it to me as a crime. Consider what the world is made of, and you will not find my suspicions chimerical. Add to this, that when, on correcting the the latter part of of the fifth book of the Task, I came to consider the solemnity and sacred nature of the subjects there handled, it seemed to me an incongruity at the least, not to call it by a harsher name, to follow up such premises with such a conclusion. I am well content therefore with having laughed, and made others laugh, and will build my hopes of success, as a poet, upon more important matter.

In our printing business we now jog on merrily enough. The coming week will I hope bring me to an end of the Task, and the next fortnight to an end of the whole. I am glad to have Paley on my side in the affair of education. He is certainly on all subjects a sensible man, and on such a wise one. But I am mistaken, if Tiocinium do not make some of my friends angry, and procure me enemies not a few. There is a sting in verse, that prose neither has, nor can have, and I do not know that schools in the gross, and especially public schools, have ever been so pointedly condemned before. But they are become a nuisance, a pest, an abomination, and it is fit that the eyes and noses of mankind should, if possible, be opened to perceive it.

This is indeed an author's letter; but it is an author's letter to his friend. If you will be the friend of an author, you must expect such letters. Come July, and come yourself, with as many of your exterior selves as can possibly come with you.

Yours, my dear William, affectionately, and with your
mother's remembrances, W C

CCLXXXIX

**DR. JOHNSON'S FAVOURABLE OPINION OF HIS
POEMS—MR BULL'S PUPILS—REMARKS ON
MINISTERIAL ACADEMIES.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May, 22, 1784

I am glad to have received at last an account of Dr Johnson's favourable opinion of my book. I thought it wanting, and had long since concluded that, not having had the happiness to please him, I owed my ignorance of his sentiments to the tenderness of my friends at Hoxton, who would not mortify me with an account of his disapprobation. It occurs to me that I owe him thanks for interposing between me and the resentment of the Reviewers, who seldom show mercy to an advocate for evangelical truth, whether in prose or verse. I therefore enclose a short acknowledgment, which, if you see no impropriety in the measure, you can I imagine without much difficulty convey to him through the hands of Mr Latrobe. To him I also make my compliments, with thanks for the share he took in the patronage of the volume. If on any account you judge it an inexpedient step, you can easily suppress the letter.

I pity Mr Bull. What harder task can any man under take than the management of those, who have reached the age of manhood without having ever felt the force of authority, or passed through any of the preparatory parts of education? I had either forgot, or never adverted to the circumstance, that his disciples were to be men. At present however I am not surprised that, being such, they are found disobedient, untractable, insolent, and conceited, qualities, that generally prevail in the minds of adults in exact proportion to their ignorance. He dined with us since I received your last. It was on Thursday that he was here. He came dejected, burthened, full of complaints, but we sent him away cheerful. He is very

sensible of the prudence, delicacy, and attention to his character, which the society have discovered in their conduct towards him upon this occasion, and indeed it does them honour, for it were past all enduring, if a charge of insufficiency should obtain a moment's regard, when brought by five such coxcombs against a man of his erudition and ability. The worst part of the business is, that unless young men can be found modest, well tempered, humble, and teachable, there seems to be no hope. He is indeed nervous, and may seem to want those stern features, and that determined tone and manner that are almost indispensably requisite in a tutor. But I do not see that in the present case the matter would be much mended, did he possess them. For what impression can a look, or the most emphatical threat be expected to make, where there is no power to make it good? The rod is out of the question. They are too old, though not too wise for that. Impositions, by way of penalty, are equally so, both because they are incapable of performing any, and because at their age, they may choose whether they will submit to them or not. The society may indeed expel them, and these hopeful youths have, it should seem, no great objection to their doing so. There are other academies ready to receive them, and which, because untried, they prefer to yours. They are therefore under no sufficient control, perfectly easy with respect to the consequences of their refractoriness, and of course set no bounds to their insolence. I do not assert it with confidence, but am much inclined to believe that an institution of this kind would succeed better, were the pupils admitted at a much earlier age. It could not indeed be hoped that all would be converted and become fit for the ministry. But having the advantage of mutual ordinances, it is probable that some would, and the rest, at a proper age, having been soberly and well trained, might be sent out to serve society in some other capacity. But this is thrown out merely by the way, for I already foresee that it would require a change in the whole plan.

I rather wonder that a man of so liberal a mind as Mr Brewer should be so much hurt by your publication, and

wonder no less that after having seen in it the reasons that influenced you to print it, he should express so much surprise and concern at its appearance Was not your probity impeached when you were charged with interested motives, for continuing in the church? and when the sincerity of your opinion respecting her ritual, discipline and order was called in question? But such is the influence of a denomination, that the most unprejudiced have yet a bias which in the long run discovers itself

Poor Nat Gee has disgraced his gray hairs,—He is suspended *ad officia*, and his eldest son says Amen for him But I suppose William Peace has given you this piece of history, which I therefore needed not to have mentioned He has probably told you too that Lady Austen is gone to Bath

This fine May makes us amends for a doleful winter The hot weather came on so fast, that there was not more than a week's interval between the nakedness of December and the full leaf We are in good health, and always remember you and Mrs. Newton with sincere affection

Yours, my dear friend, WM COWPER

CCXC

DR JOHNSON.

10 THE RIV JOHN NEWTON

June 5, 1784

WHEN you told me that the critique upon my volume was written though not by Dr. Johnson himself, yet by a friend of his, to whom he recommended the book and the business, I inferred from that expression that I was indebted to him for an active interposition in my favour, and consequently that he had a right to my thanks But now I concur entirely in sentiment with you, and heartily second your vote for the suppression of thanks which do not seem to be much called for Yet even now were it possible that I could fall into his company, I should not think a slight acknowledgment misapplied I was no other way anxious about his opinion, nor could he so, after you and some others had given a favourable one, than it was natural I

should be, knowing as I did that his opinion had been con-
 ulted I am affectionately yours, W C

CCXCI

**THANKS FOR A LATIN DICTIONARY—INTENTION
 OF READING THE CLASSICS—REMARKS ON
 THE TAX UPON CANDLES—AN ASS
 TRYING HIS VOICE**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

July 3 1784

I was sorry that I could only take a flying leave of you. When the coach stopped at the door, I thought you had been in your chamber, my dishabille would not otherwise have prevented my running down for the sake of a more suitable parting.

We rejoice that you had a safe journey, and though we should have rejoiced still more had you had no occasion for a physician, we are glad that, having had need of one, you had the good fortune to find him. Let us hear soon that his advice has proved effectual, and that you are delivered from all ill symptoms.

Thanks for the care you have taken to furnish me with a dictionary. It is rather strange that at my time of life, and after a youth spent in classical pursuits, I should want one, and stranger still that, being possessed at present of only one Latin author in the world, I should think it worth while to purchase one. I say that it is strange, and indeed I think it so myself. But I have a thought that when my present labours of the pen are ended, I may go to school again, and refresh my spirits by a little intercourse with the Mantuan and the Sabine bard, and perhaps by a re-perusal of some others, whose works we generally lay by at that period of life when we are best qualified to read them, when, the judgment and the taste being formed, their beauties are least likely to be overlooked.

This change of wind and weather comforts me, and I should have enjoyed the first fine morning I have seen this month with a peculiar relish, if our new tax-maker had not

put me out of temper. I am angry with him, not only for the matter, but for the manner of his proposal. When he lays his impost upon horses, he is even jocular, and laughs, though considering that wheels, and miles, and grooins were taxed before, a graver countenance upon the occasion would have been more decent. But he provokes me still more by reasoning as he does, on the justification of the tax upon candles. Some families, he says, will suffer little by it, — Why? Because they are so poor, that they cannot afford themselves more than ten pounds in the year. Excellent! They can use but few, therefore they will pay but little, and consequently will be but little burthened, an argument which for its cruelty and effrontery seems worthy of a hero, but he does not avail himself of the whole force of it, nor with all his wisdom had sagacity enough to see that it contains, when pushed to its utmost extent, a free discharge and acquittal of the poor from the payment of any tax at all a commodity, being once made too expensive for their pockets, will cost them nothing, for they will not buy it. Rejoice, therefore, O ye pennyless! the minister will indeed send you to bed in the dark, but your remaining half penny will be safe, instead of being spent in the useless luxury of candlelight, it will buy you a roll for breakfast, which you will eat no doubt with gratitude to the man who so kindly lessens the number of your disbursements, and while he seems to threaten your money, saves it. I wish he would remember, that the half penny, which government imposes the shopkeeper will swell to two-pence. I wish he would visit the miserable huts of our lace makers at Olney, and see them working in the winter months, by the light of a tiring candle, from four in the afternoon till midnight. I wish he had laid his tax upon the ten thousand lamps that illuminate the Pantheon, upon the flambeaux that wait upon ten thousand chariots and sedans in an evening, and upon the wax candles that give light to ten thousand card-tables. I wish, in short, that he would consider the pockets of the poor as sacred, and that to tax a people already so necessitous is but to discourage the little industry that is left among us, by driving the laborious to despair.

A neighbour of mine, in Silver End, keeps an ass. the

ass lives on the other side of the garden wall, and I am writing in the green-house it happens that he is this morning most musically disposed, either cheered by the fine weather, or by some new tune which he has just acquired, or by finding his voice more harmonious than usual. It would be cruel to mortify so fine a singer, therefore I do not tell him that he interrupts and hinders me; but I venture to tell you so, and to plead his performance in excuse of my abrupt conclusion.

I send you the goldfinches, with which you will do as you see good. We have an affectionate remembrance of your late visit, and of all our friends at Stock.

Believe me ever yours,

W. C.

CCXCII.

JUPITER'S VISIT TO THE ÆTHIOPIANS—QUESTION HOW FAR THE WISE MEN OF ANTIQUITY BE- LIEVED IN PAGANISM—HIS OWN INDIF- FERENCE AS TO POLITICS—TAX.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 3, 1784.

A DEARTH of materials, a consciousness that my subjects are for the most part and must be uninteresting and unimportant, but above all, a poverty of animal spirits, that makes writing much a great fatigue to me, have occasioned my choice of smaller paper. Acquiesce in the justness of these reasons for the present, and if ever the times should mend with me, I sincerely promise to amend with them.

Homer says on a certain occasion, that Jupiter, when he was wanted at home, was gone to partake of an entertainment provided for him by the Æthiopians. If by Jupiter we understand the weather, or the season, as the ancients frequently did, we may say, that our English Jupiter has been absent on account of some such invitation, during the whole month of June he left us to experience almost the rigours of winter. This fine day, however, affords us some hope that the feast is ended, and that we shall enjoy his company without the interference of his Æthiopian friends.

Is it possible that the wise men of antiquity could entertain a real reverence for the fabulous rubbish, which they dignified with the name of religion? We, who have been favoured from our infancy with so clear a light, and perhaps hardly competent to decide the question, and may strive in vain to imagine the absurdities that even a good understanding may receive as truths, when totally unaided by revelation. It seems, however, that men, whose conceptions upon other subjects were often sublime, whose reasoning powers were undoubtedly equal to your own, and whose management in matters of jurisprudence that required a very industrious examination of evidence, was as acute and subtle as that of a modern Attorney-general, could not be the dupes of such imposture as a child among us would detect and laugh at. Juvenal, I remember, introduces one of his Satires with an observation, that were some in his day who had the hardness to laugh at the stories of Tartarus, and Styx, and Charon, and of the frogs that croak upon the banks of Lethe, giving his reader at the same time cause to suspect that he was himself one of that profane number. Horace, on the other hand, declares in sober sadness that he would not for all the world get into a boat with a man who had divulged the Eleusian mysteries. Yet we know that those mysteries, whatever they might be, were altogether as unworthy to be esteemed divine as the mythology of the vulgar. How then must we determine? If Horace were a good and orthodox heathen, how came Juvenal to be such an ungracious libertine in principle, as to ridicule the doctrines which the other held as sacred? Their opportunities of information, and their mental advantages, were equal. I feel myself rather inclined to believe, that Juvenal's avowed infidelity was sincere, and that Horace was no better than a canting hypocritical professor.

You must grant me a dispensation for saying any thing, whether it be sense or nonsense, upon the subject of politics. It is truly a matter in which I am so little interested, that were it not that it sometimes serves me for a theme, when I can find no other, I should never mention it. I would forfeit a large sum if, after advertising a month in

the gazette, the minister of the day, whoever he may be, could discover a man that cares about him or his measures so little as I do. When I say that I would forfeit a large sum, I mean to have it understood that I would forfeit such a sum, if I had it. If Mr Pitt be indeed a virtuous man, as such I respect him. But at the best, I fear, that he will have to say at last with *Aeneas*

Si Perqama dextra

Defendi possent, etiam hinc defensa fuissent

Be he what he may, I do not like his taxes. At least I am much disposed to quarrel with some of them. The charge of ten shillings upon horses, considering that travellers were heavily charged before, appears to me unreasonable and herein I must be at least disinterested, for I never ride. But the additional duty upon candles, by which the poor will be much affected, hurts me most. He says indeed that they will but little feel it, because even now they can hardly afford the use of them. He had certainly put no compassion into his budget, when he produced from it this tax, and such an argument to support it. Justly translated it seems to amount to this,—"Make the necessaries of life too expensive for the poor to reach them, and you will save their money. If they buy but few candles, they will pay but little tax, and if they buy none, the tax as to them, will be annihilated." True. But, in the mean time, they will break their shins against their furniture, if they have any, and will be but little the richer, when the hours, in which they might work, if they could see, shall be deducted.

Mr Unwin left us on Wednesday. Mr Powley is with us, and begs to be remembered. Mr Grindon is confined under a second stroke of the apoplexy, and is thought to be in danger. I enclose a letter to old Mr Small, who has sent me some rhubarb seed, for which I write to thank him, and shall be your debtor for a penny, by way of *trium*. Mrs Unwin, except that she has a pain in her face, is well. I have bought a great dictionary, and want nothing but Latin authors to furnish me with the use of it. Had I purchased them first, I had begun at the right end. But I could not afford it. I beseech you admire my prudence.

Vivite, valete, et mementote nostrum

Yours affectionately,

W C

CCXCIII.

LADY AUSTEN—ALTERATION PROPOSED IN SOME
LINES OF VINCENT BOURNE'S—HUME'S ESSAY
ON SUIOIDE.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

July 12, 1784

YOUR sister leaves us this evening, her journey will be on foot to Newport your mother and I mean to accompany her as far as to the limits of our usual walk. The coach takes her up at five in the morning. It will be on both sides a sorrowful parting, the distance of the separation and the length of it will make it such. But this first part of the business is rather in danger of being disconcerted the weather lowers and threatens to make a walk impracticable. How the ladies will settle it, therefore, as yet I know not, having seen neither of them this morning. Your sister desires me to thank you for the hint given to Miss Unwin, for which she holds herself not the less indebted to you though it did not succeed.

You are going to Bristol. A lady, not long since our very near neighbour, is probably there she *was* there very lately. If you should chance to fall into her company, remember, if you please, that we found the connexion on some accounts an inconvenient one, that we do not wish to renew it, and conduct yourself accordingly. A character with which we spend all our time should be made on purpose for us too much or too little of any single ingredient spoils all in the instance in question, the dissimilitude was too great not to be felt continually, and consequently made our intercourse unpleasant. We have reason, however, to believe that she has given up all thoughts of return to Olney.

I think with you that Vinny's line is not pure. If he knew any authority that would have justified his substitution of a participle for a substantive, he would have done well to have noted it in the margin. But I am much inclined to think that he did not. Poets are sometimes expected to do difficulties insurmountable by lawful means, whence I imagine was originally derived that indul

gence that allows them the use of what is called *poetical licence*. But that liberty, I believe, contents itself with the abbreviation or protraction of a word, or an alteration in the quantity of a syllable, and never presumes to trespass upon grammatical propriety. I have dared to attempt to correct my master, but am not bold enough to say that I have succeeded. Neither am I sure that my memory serves me correctly with the line that follows, but when I recollect the English, am persuaded that it cannot differ much from the true one. This therefore is my edition of the passage—

Bona amatori tot tum permissa beato

Or,

*Bona quæ juveni induluit Susanna beato
Navarcha optaret maximus esse sua*

The preceding lines I have utterly forgotten, and am consequently at a loss to know whether the distich, thus mangled, will connect itself with them easily, and as it ought.

We thank you for the drawing of your house. I never knew my idea of what I had never seen resemble the original so much. At some time or other you have doubtless given me an exact account of it, and I have retained the faithful impression made by your description. It is a comfortable abode, and the time I hope will come when I shall enjoy more than the mere representation of it.

I have not yet read the last Review, but dipping into it, I accidentally fell upon their account of Hume's Essay on Suicide. I am glad that they have liberality enough to condemn the licentiousness of an author whom they so much admire. —I say liberality, for there is as much bigotry in the world to that man's errors as there is in the hearts of some sectaries to their peculiar modes and tenets. He is the Pope of thousands, as blind and presumptuous as myself. God certainly infatuates those who will not see. It were otherwise impossible, that a man, naturally shrewd and sensible, and whose understanding has had all the advantages of constant exercise and cultivation, could have satisfied himself, or have hoped to satisfy others with such palpable sophistry as has not even the grace of

fallacy to recommend it His silly assertion that because it would be no sin to divert the course of the Danube, therefore it is none to let out a few ounces of blood from an artery, would justify not suicide only, but homicide also, for the lives of ten thousand men are of less consequence to their country, than the course of that river to the regions through which it flows. Population would soon make society amends for the loss of her ten thousand members, but the loss of the Danube would be felt by all the millions that dwell upon its banks to all generations But the life of a man and the water of a river can never come into competition with each other in point of value, unless in the estimation of an unprincipled philosopher

I thank you for your offer of the classics When I want I will borrow Horace is my own Homer, with a clavis, I have had possession of some years They are the property of Mr Jones A Virgil, the property of Mr Scott, I have had as long, I am nobody in the affair of tenses, unless when you are present Yours ever, W C

CCXCIV.

**COMMEMORATION OF HANDEL—BEDLAM—A
FRIGHTFUL ACCIDENT—AN UNEXPECTED
LETTER FROM OSTEND.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 19, 1784

NOTWITHSTANDING the justness of the comparison by which you illustrate the folly and wickedness of a congregation assembled to pay divine honours to the memory of Handel, I could not help laughing at the picture you have drawn of the musical convicts. The subject indeed is awful, and your manner of representing it is perfectly just, yet I laughed and must have laughed had I been one of your hearers. But the ridicule lies in the preposterous conduct which you reprove, and not in your reproof of it A people so musically mad as to make not only their future trial the subject of a concert, but even the message of mercy from their King

and the only one he will ever send them, must excuse me if I am merry where there is more cause to be said, for melancholy as their condition is, their behaviour under it is too ludicrous not to be felt as such, and would conquer even a more settled gravity than mine

In those days when Bedlam was open to the cruel curiosity of holiday fencers, I have been a visitor there. Though a boy, I was not altogether insensible of the misery of the poor captives, nor destitute of feeling for them. But the madness of some of them had such a humorous air, and displayed itself in so many whimsical freaks, that it was impossible not to be entertained, at the same time that I was angry with myself for being so. A line of Bourne's is very expressive of the spectacle which this world exhibits, tragi-comical as the incidents of it are, absurd in themselves, but terrible in their consequences.

Sunt res humanæ stultæ ludibria sumæ

An instance of this deplorable merriment has occurred in the course of last week at Olney. A feast gave the occasion to a catastrophe truly shocking. Lucy and his wife, and two women whose name is Hine, relations of the glazier, went in a covered cart to Woolaston, to partake of the anniversary merry-making at that place. Having spent the day, no doubt, very agreeably, they got into their tumbril, expecting nothing but they should soon be safe at home again. Some geese were in the horse-path, and in danger of being run over. Lucy waved his hat to scare them, forgetting that his horse might possibly be frightened too. He was so, and ran away. On one side of the road was a steep declivity, where two women were killed by an overturn about two years ago, fearing the same fate, and the women screaming and clinging about him in such a manner that he was unable to guide his horse, Lucy gave him a sudden a violent twitch to the other side. In a moment, running as he did at full speed, he dashed himself and the cart against a wall: the force of the shock threw him and broke all his harness, a circumstance without which not a single life would have been saved. Lucy received a violent contusion on his head, and his legs were terribly torn. One of women had her arm broken and her

wrist dislocated, the other was only bruised, but Mrs Lucy was the greatest sufferer, having her skull fractured, and one side of her face with half her scalp so completely separated from the bone, that when her husband went to take her up, he mistook the loose flesh for the cushion she wore upon her head. The story is almost too shocking to be related, but having begun it I could not choose whether I would finish it or not. She is, however, alive, and is attended at Woolaston, from which place she could not be removed, by Dr Kerr. I heard yesterday that there were hopes of her recovery, which is the more wonderful as she is with child. So dangerous it is to all, and so fatal to some, to forget that we are not introduced into this world merely to amuse ourselves for a few years as well as we can, and then to pass out of it unnoticed by Him who sent us.

About a month since I had a letter from one whom you remember, and from whom I little expected to hear,—James Nichols. He wrote to enquire after his old connexions at Olney, particularly after Nelly Langton, desiring to be informed of all that has happened here; how many births, deaths, and marriages, I suppose, have taken place at Olney since he left it, but I have not answered him, neither do I intend it. He says much about the Lord and his dealings with him, but I have long considered James as a sort of pedler and hawker in these matters, rather than as a creditable and substantial merchant. He is now a mason's labourer at Ostend, and when he wrote had just received a hurt in his leg by a fall from the top of a ladder.

Remember us as we remember you, that is with undiminished friendship and affection.

Yours, my dear friend,

WM COWPER

CCXCV

**MR NEWTON AT LYMINGTON—MR. GILPIN—
ALLUSION TO HIS OWN STATE—MR NEW
TON'S OPPONENTS.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

July 28, 1794

I may perhaps be short, but am not willing that you

should go to Lymington without first having had a line from me. I know that place well, having spent six weeks there above twenty years ago. The town is neat, and the country delightful. You walk well, and will consequently find a part of the coast, called Hall-Cliff, within the reach of your ten toes. It was a favourite walk of mine, to the best of my remembrance, about three miles distance from Lymington. There you may stand upon the beach, and contemplate the Needle-rock, at least you might have done so twenty years ago. But since that time I think it is fallen from its base, and is drowned, and is no longer a visible object of contemplation. I wish you may pass your time here happily, as in all probability you will, perhaps usefully, too to others, undoubtedly so to yourself.

The manner in which you have been previously made acquainted with Mr Gilpin gives a providential air to your journey, and affords reason to hope that you may be charged with a message to him. I admire him as a biographer. But is Mrs Unwin and I were talking of him last night, we could not but wonder that a man should see so much excellence in the lives, and so much glory and beauty in the deaths of the martyrs, whom he has recorded, and at the same time disapprove the principles that produced the very conduct he admired. It seems, however, a step towards the truth, to applaud the fruits of it, and one cannot help thinking that one step more would put him in possession of the truth itself. By your means may he be enabled to take it!

We are obliged to you for the preference you would have given to Olney, had not Providence determined your course another way. But as, when we saw you last summer, you gave us no reason to expect you this, we are the less disappointed. At your age and mine, biennial visits have such a gap between them that we cannot promise ourselves upon those terms very numerous future interviews. But whether ours are to be many or few, you will always be welcome to me for the sake of the comfortable days that are past. In my present state of mind my friendship for you indeed is as warm as ever. But I feel myself very indifferently qualified to be your companion. Other days than these inglorious

ous and unprofitable ones are promised me, and when I see them I shall rejoice. In the meantime my faith in the assurances of my friends is too weak to be productive of any thing like joy. My sensations upon such occasions are rather like those of poor old Tantalus, if he be still where the poets placed him.

I saw the advertisement of your adversary's book. He is happy at least in this, that, whether he have brains or none, he strikes without the danger of being stricken again. He could not wish to engage in a controversy upon easier terms. The other whose publication is postponed till Christmas, is resolved, I suppose, to do something. But do what he will, he cannot prove that you have not been aspersed, or that you have not refuted the charge, which, unless he can do, I think he will do little to the purpose.

We heartily wish that the sea-bathing may be of use to Eliza. I have known it serviceable in similar cases. Mrs. Unwin thinks of you, and always with a grateful recollection of yours and Mrs. Newton's kindness. She has had a nervous fever lately, but I hope she is better. The weather forbids walking, a prohibition hurtful to us both. I forgot to tell you that Mr. Grindon died soon after I had informed you of his illness. His son succeeds him. We heartily wish you a good journey, and are affectionately yours,

W C AND M U

CCXCVI

**TAX ON WHEELS AND HORSES—WALKS TO WEST
ON—REMARKS ON THE SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS.
FASHIONS—RESTRICTIONS OF FRAKING.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Aug 14, 1794

I GIVE you joy of a journey performed without trouble or danger. You have travelled five hundred miles without having encountered either. Some neighbours of ours, about a fortnight since, made an excursion only to a neighbouring village, and brought home with them fractured skulls, and broken limbs, and one of them is dead. For my own part, I seem pretty much exempted from the dan-

gers of the road,—thanks to that tender interest and concern which the legislature takes in my security! Having, no doubt, their fears lest so precious a life should determine too soon, and by some untimely stroke of misadventure, they have made wheels and horses so expensive, that I am not likely to owe my death to either

Your mother and I continue to visit Weston daily, and find in those agreeable bowers such amusement as leaves us but little room to regret that we can go no further. Having touched that theme, I cannot abstain from the pleasure of telling you that our neighbours in that place, being about to leave it for some time, and meeting us there but a few evenings before their departure, entreated us during their absence to consider the garden, and all its contents, as our own, and to gather whatever we liked, without the least scruple. We accordingly picked strawberries as often as we went, and brought home as many bundles of honeysuckles as served to perfume our dwelling till they returned. I hear that Mr Throckmorton is making another balloon, a paper one, containing sixteen quires. It is to fly upon the wings of ignited spirits, and will therefore, I suppose, be sent up at night. I take it for granted that we shall be invited to the spectacle, but whether we shall have the courage to expose ourselves to the inconveniences of a nocturnal visit, is at present doubtful.

Once more, by the aid of Lord Dartmouth, I find myself in danger in the Pacific Ocean. In our last night's lecture we were made acquainted with the island of Hapae, where we had never been before. The French and Italians, it seems, have but little cause to plume themselves on account of their achievements in the dancing way, and we may hereafter, without much repining at it, acknowledge their superiority in that art. They are equalled, perhaps excelled, by savages. How wonderful, that without any intercourse with a politer world, and having made no proficiency in any other accomplishment, they should in this, however, have made themselves such adepts, that for regularity and grace of motion they might even be our masters! How wonderful too, that with such a tub and a stick they should be able to produce such harmony, as persons accustomed to the

sweetest music cannot but hear with pleasure! Is it not very difficult to account for the striking difference of character, that obtains among the inhabitants of these islands? Many of them are near neighbours to each other, and their opportunities of improvement much the same, yet some of them are in a degree polite, discover symptoms of taste, and have a sense of elegance, while others are as rude as we naturally expect to find a people who have never had any communication with the northern hemisphere. These volumes furnish much matter of philosophical speculation, and often entertain me even while I am not employed in reading them

I am sorry you have not been able to ascertain the doubtful intelligence I have received on the subject of cork skirts and bosoms. I am now every day occupied in giving all the grace I can to my new production, and in transcribing it I shall soon arrive at the passage that censures that folly, which I shall be loth to expunge, but which I must not spare, unless the criminals can be convicted. The world however is not so unproductive of subjects for censure, but that it may possibly supply me with some other that may serve as well

If you know any body that is writing, or intends to write, an epic poem on the new regulation of *franks*, you may give him my compliments, and these two lines for a beginning—

Hæc quot amatores nunc turquet epistola rara!
Vectigal certum, pericloraque gratia FRANKI!

Yours faithfully,

W C

CCXCVII

**PLEASURES AT OLNEY—A BALLOON—COOK'S
LAST VOYAGE**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

August 16, 1784

HAD you not expressed a desire to hear from me before you take leave of Lymington, I certainly should not have answered you so soon. Knowing the place, and the amusement it affords, I should have had more modesty than to suppose myself capable of adding any thing to your present entertainments worthy to rank with them. I am not how

ever totally destitute of such pleasures as an inland country may pretend to. If my windows do not command a view of the ocean, at least they look out upon a profusion of mig-nonette, which, if it be not so grand an object, is however quite as fragrant. And if I have not a hermit in a grotto, I have nevertheless myself in a greenhouse,—a less venerable figure perhaps, but not at all less animated than he. Nor are we in this nook altogether unfurnished with such means of philosophical experiment and speculation as at present the world rings with. On Thursday morning last, we sent up a balloon from Emberton meadow. Thrice it rose, and as oft descended, and in the evening it performed another flight at Newport, where it went up, and came down no more. Like the arrow discharged at the pigeon in the Trojan games, it kindled in the air, and was consumed in a moment. I have not heard what interpretation the sooth-sayers have given to the omen, but shall wonder a little if the Newton shepherd prognosticate any thing less from it than the bloody war that was ever waged in Europe.

I am reading Cook's last voyage, and am much pleased and amused with it. It seems that in some of the Friendly isles, they excel so much in dancing, and perform that operation with such exquisite delicacy and grace, that they are not surpassed even upon our European stages. O! that Vestris had been in the ship, that he might have seen himself outdone by a savage. The paper indeed tells us that the queen of France has clapped this king of capers up in prison, for declining to dance before her, on a pretence of sickness, when in fact he was in perfect health. If this be true, perhaps he may by this time be prepared to second such a wish as mine, and to think that the duration he suffers would be well exchanged for a dance at Anamooka. I should however as little have expected to hear that these islanders had such consummate skill in an art, that requires so much taste in the conduct of the person, as that they were good mathematicians and astronomers. Defective as they are in every branch of knowledge, and in every other species of refinement, it seems wonderful that they should arrive at such perfection in the dance, which some of our English gentlemen, with all the assistance

of French instruction, find it impossible to learn. We must conclude therefore that particular nations have a genius for particular feats, and that our neighbours in France, and our friends in the South Sea, have minds very nearly akin, though they inhabit countries so very remote from each other.

Mrs Unwin remembers to have been in company with Mr Gilpin at her brother's. She thought him very sensible and polite, and consequently very agreeable.

We are truly glad that Mrs Newton and yourself are so well, and that there is reason to hope that Eliza is better. You will learn from this letter that we are so, and that for my own part I am not quite so low in spirits as at some times. Learn too, what you knew before, that we love you all, and that I am Your affectionate friend, W. C.

CCXCVIII

**PROGRESS IN TRANSCRIBING THE TASK—VISIT
FROM MR. VENN; HIS APPROBATION OF THE
FORMER VOLUME—COWPER PLEASED, BUT
NOT ELATED WITH PRAISE.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, Sept 11, 1784

I AM obliged to you for a plentiful supply of franks, and I hope that you have not been inattentive to my interests upon the occasion but have furnished yourself with an equal number bearing my address. You have my thanks also for the inquiries you have made upon the subjects of male rumps corked. Despairing however of meeting with such confirmation of that new mode, as would warrant a general stricture, I had, before the receipt of your last, discarded the passage in which I had censured it. I am proceeding in my transcript with all possible dispatch, having nearly finished the fourth book, and hoping, by the end of the month, to have completed the work. When finished, that no time may be lost, I purpose taking the first opportunity to transmit it to Lemon Street, but must beg that you will give me in your next an exact direction, that

it may proceed to the mark without any hazard of a miscarriage. A second transcript of it would be a labour I should very reluctantly undertake, for though I have kept copies of all the material alterations, there are many minutiae of which I have made none it is besides slavish work, and of all occupations that which I dislike the most I know that you will lose no time in reading it, but I must beg you likewise to lose none in conveying it to Johnson, that if he chooses to print it, it may go to press immediately, if not, that it may be offered directly to your friend Longman, or any other. Not that I doubt Johnson's acceptance of it, for he will find it more *ad captum populi* than the former I have not numbered the lines, except of the four first books, which amount to three thousand two hundred and seventy-six I imagine therefore that the whole contains about five thousand I mention this circumstance now, because it may save him some trouble in casting the size of the book, and I might possibly forget it in another letter

About a fortnight since, we had a visit from Mr Venn, whom I had not seen for many years He introduced himself to me very politely, with many thanks on his own part, and on the part of his family, for the amusement which my book had afforded them He said he was sure that it must make its way, and hoped that I had not laid down the pen I only told him in general terms, that the use of the pen was necessary to my well being, but gave him no hint of this last production He said that one passage in particular had absolutely electrified him, meaning the description of the Briton in Table Talk He seemed indeed to emit some sparks when he mentioned it I was glad to have that picture noticed by a man of a cultivated mind, because I had always thought well of it myself, and had never heard it distinguished before Assure yourself, my William, that though I would not write thus freely on the subject of me or mine to any but yourself, the pleasure I have in doing it is a most innocent one, and partakes not in the least degree, so far as my conscience is to be credited, of that vanity with which authors are in general so justly chargeable Whatever I do, I confess that I most sincerely

wish to do it well, and when I have reason to hope that I have succeeded, am pleased indeed, but not proud, for He, who has placed every thing out of the reach of man, except what he freely gives him, has made it impossible for a reflecting mind, that knows this, to indulge so silly a passion for a moment

Our connexion with the Westonites is much in *statu quo* We frequently meet, and are always most perfectly polite Last week we encountered the whole family in the evening Mr Throckmorton said that he should send up a balloon in half an hour, and that if we had any curiosity to see it, and would step home with him, by the time we had drank a dish of tea, it would be ready to mount At this time, however, it was beginning to be dark, and being well assured that the delay would be longer than he supposed, we excused ourselves on account of the late hour, in fact, we should have had two miles to walk between ten and eleven o'clock at night, which would not have suited either of us We expect, however, to be invited to a daylight exhibition of the same kind on Tuesday. He has sent us partridges and a hare

Yours, W C

CCXCIX

DR. COTTON.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 11, 1784

I HAVE never seen Dr Cotton's book, concerning which your sisters question me, nor did I know, till you mentioned it, that he had written any thing newer than his *Visions* I have no doubt that it is so far worthy of him as to be pious and sensible, and I believe no man living is better qualified to write on such subjects as his title seems to announce Some years have passed since I heard from him, and considering his great age, it is probable that I shall hear from him no more, but I shall always respect him He is truly a philosopher, according to my judgment of the character, every title of his knowledge in natural subjects being connected in his mind with the firm belief of an Omnipotent agent.

Yours, &c W C

CCC

HIS GARDEN—SWEET SOUNDS OF NATURE.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 18, 1784

FOLLOWING your good example, I lay before me a sheet of my largest paper. It was this moment fair and unblemished, but I have begun to blot it, and having begun, am not likely to cease till I have spoiled it. I have sent you many a sheet that in my judgment of it has been very unworthy of your acceptance, but my conscience was in some measure satisfied by reflecting, that if it were good for nothing, at the same time it cost you nothing, except the trouble of reading, it. But the case is altered now. You must pay a solid price for frothy matter, and though I do not absolutely pick your pocket, yet you lose your money, and, as the saying is, are never the wiser, a saying literally fulfilled to the reader of my epistles.

My green house is never so pleasant as when we are just upon the point of being turned out of it. The gentleness of the autumnal suns, and the calmness of this latter season, make it a much more agreeable retreat than we ever find it in summer, when, the winds being generally brisk, we can not cool it by admitting a sufficient quantity of air, without being at the same time incommoded by it. But now I sit with all the windows and the door wide open, and am regaled with the scent of every flower in a garden as full of flowers as I have known how to make it. We keep no bees but if I lived in a hive I should hardly hear more of their music. All the bees in the neighbourhood resort to a bed of mignonette, opposite to the window, and pay me for the honey they get out of it by a hum, which, though rather monotonous, is as agreeable to my ear as the whistling of my linnets. All the sounds that nature utters are delightful—at least in this country. I should not perhaps find the roaring of lions in Africa, or of bears in Russia, very pleasing, but I know no beast in England whose voice I do not account musical, save and except always the braying of an ass. The notes of all our birds and fowls please me, without one exception. I should not indeed think of keeping a

goose in a cage, that might hang him up in the parlour for the sake of his melody, but a goose upon a common, or in a farm yard, is no bad performer, and as to insects, if the black beetle and beetles indeed of all hues, will keep out of my way, I have no objection to any of the rest; on the contrary, in whatever key they sing, from the gnat's fine treble to the bass of the humble bee, I admire them all. Seriously however it strikes me as a very observable instance of providential kindness to man, that such an exact accord has been contrived between his ear, and the sounds with which, at least in a rural situation, it is almost every moment visited. All the world is sensible of the uncomfortable effect that certain sounds have upon the nerves, and consequently upon the spirits —and if a sinful world had been filled with such as would have curdled the blood, and have made the sense of hearing a perpetual inconvenience, I do not know that we should have had a right to complain. But now the fields, the woods, the gardens, have each their concert, and the ear of man is for ever regaled by creatures who seem only to please themselves. Even the ears that are deaf to the Gospel, are continually entertained, though without knowing it, by sounds for which they are solely indebted to its author. There is somewhere in infinite space a world that does not roll within the precincts of mercy, and as it is reasonable, and even scriptural, to suppose that there is music in Heaven, in those dismal regions perhaps the reverse of it is found, tones so dismal, as to make woe itself more insupportable, and to acuminate even despair. But my paper admonishes me in good time to draw the reins, and to check the descent of my fancy into deeps, with which she is but too familiar.

Our best love attends you both, with yours,

Sum ut semper, tui studiosissimus,

W. C.

CCCI

PUNCTUATION—MOTT. FOR THE TASK.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Oct. 2, 1784

A POET can but ill spare time for prose. The truth is, I am in haste to finish my transcript, that you may receive it

time enough to give it a leisurely reading before you go to town ; which whether I shall be able to accomplish, is at present uncertain I have the whole punctuation to settle, which in blank verse is of the last importance, and of a species peculiar to that composition . for I know no use of points, unless to direct the voice, the management of which, in the reading of blank verse, being more difficult than in the reading of any other poetry, requires perpetual hints and notices, to regulate the inflections, cadences, and pauses. This however is an affair that in spite of grammarians must be left pretty much *ad libitum scriptoris*, for I suppose every author points according to his own reading. If I can send the parcel to the waggon by one o'clock next Wednesday, you will have it on Saturday the ninth But this is more than I expect. Perhaps I shall not be able to dispatch it till the eleventh, in which case it will not reach you till the thirteenth I rather think, that the latter of these two periods will obtain, because, besides the punctuation, I have the argument of each book to transcribe Add to this, that in writing for the printer, I am forced to write my best, which makes slow work The motto of the whole is—*Fit surculus arbor* If you can put the author's name under it, do so,—if not, it must go without one, for I know not to whom to ascribe it It was a motto taken by a certain prince of Orange, in the year 1733, but not to a poem of his own writing, or indeed to any poem at all, but, as I think, to a medal

Mr——is a Cornish member ; but for what place in Cornwall I know not All I know of him is, that I saw him once clap his two hands upon a rail, meaning to leap over it,—but he did not think the attempt a safe one, and therefore took them off again He was in company with Mr Throckmorton With that gentleman we drank chocolate, since I wrote last The occasion of our visit was, as usual, a balloon Your mother invited her, and I him, and they promised to return the visit, but have not yet performed *"Tout le monde se trouvoit là*, as you may suppose, among the rest, Mrs W——. She was driven to the door by her son, a boy of seventeen, in a phaeton, drawn by four horses from Lilliput. This is an ambiguous ex-

pression, and should what I write now be legible a thousand years hence, might puzzle commentators Be it known therefore to the Alduces and the Stevenses of ages yet to come, that I do not mean to affirm that Mrs. W—— herself came from Lilliput that morning, or indeed that she was ever there, but merely to describe the horses, as being so diminutive, that they might be, with propriety, said to be Lilliputian

The privilege of franking having been so cropped, I know not in what manner I and my bookseller are to settle the conveyance of proof sheets hither, and back again They must travel I imagine by coach, a large quantity of them at a time, for, like other authors, I find myself under a poetical necessity of being frugal

We love you all, jointly and separately, as usual W. C

I have not seen, nor shall see, the Dissenter's answer to Mr Newton, unless you can furnish me with it.

CCCII.

UNCONNECTED THOUGHT—THE MIND SOMETIMES VACANT—REMARKS ON THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN COOK.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

October 9, 1784

The pains you have taken to disengage our correspondence from the expense with which it was threatened, convincing me that my letters, trivial as they are, are yet acceptable to you, encourage me to observe my usual punctuality You complain of unconnected thoughts I believe there is not a head in the world but might utter the same complaint, and that all would do so, were they all as attentive to their own vagaries, and as honest as yours The descriptions of your meditations at least suits mine perhaps I can go a step beyond you, upon the same ground and assert with the strictest truth that I not only do not think with connexion, but that I frequently do not think at all I am much mistaken if I do not often catch myself napping in this way, for when I ask myself what was the

last idea, (as the ushers at Westminster ask an idle boy what was the last word), I am not able to answer, but, like the boy in question, am obliged to stare and say nothing. This may be a very unphilosophical account of myself, and may clash very much with the general opinion of the learned, that the soul being an active principle, and her activity consisting in thought, she must consequently always think. But pardon me, *messieurs les philosophes*, there are moments, when if I think at all, I am utterly unconscious of doing so, and the thought, and the consciousness of it, seem to me at least, who am no philosopher, to be inseparable from each other. Perhaps however we may both be right, and if you will grant me that I do not always think, I will in return concede to you the activity you contend for, and will qualify the difference between us by supposing that though the soul be in herself, as you say, an active principle, the influence of her present union with a principle that is not such, makes her often dormant, suspends her operations, and affects her with a sort of deliquium, in which she suffers a temporary loss of all her functions. I have related to you my experience truly, and without disguise, you must therefore either admit my assertion, that the soul does not necessarily always act, or deny that mine is a human soul; and though I be sometimes more than a half of that opinion myself, it is a negative which I am sure you will not easily prove. So much for a dispute which I, little thought of being engaged in to-day

Last night I had a letter from Lord Dartmouth. It was to apprise me of the safe arrival of Cook's last voyage, which he was so kind as to lend me, in St James's Square. He writes, however, from Sandwell. The reading of those volumes afforded me much amusement, and I hope some instruction. No observation however forced itself upon me with more violence than one, that I could not help making on the death of Captain Cook. God is a jealous God, and at Owhyhee the poor man was content to be worshipped. From that moment, the remarkable interposition of Providence in his favour was converted into an opposition, that thwarted all his purposes. He left the scene of his deification, but was driven back to it by a most violent storm,

in which he suffered more than in any that had preceded it. When he departed he left his worshippers still infatuated with an idea of his godship, consequently well disposed to serve him. At his return he found them sullen, distrustful, and mysterious. A trifling theft was committed, which, by a blunder of his own in pursuing the thief after the property had been restored, was magnified into an affair of the last importance. One of their favourite chiefs was killed too by a blunder. Nothing, in short, but blunder and mistake attended him, till he fell breathless into the water, and then all was smooth again. The world indeed will not take notice, or see, that the dispensation bore evident marks of divine displeasure, but a mind I think in any degree spiritual cannot overlook them. We know from truth itself, that the death of Herod was for a similar offence. But Herod was in no sense a believer in God, nor had enjoyed half the opportunities with which our poor countryman had been favoured. It may be urged perhaps that he was in jest, that he meant nothing but his own amusement, and that of his companions. I doubt it. He knows little of the heart, who does not know that even in a sensible man it is flattered by every species of exaltation. But be it so, that he was in sport.—it was not humane, to say no worse of it, to sport with the ignorance of his friends, to mock their simplicity, to humour and acquiesce in their blind credulity. Besides, though a stock or a stone may be worshipped blameless, a baptised man may not. He knows what he does, and by suffering such honours to be paid to him, incurs the guilt of sacrilege.

We are glad that you are so happy in your church, in your society, and in all your connections. I have not left myself room to say anything of the love we feel for you.

Yours, my dear friend, W.C

CCCIII.

SENDING THE MSS. OF THE TASK—HIS AIM IN WRITING.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Oct 10, 1784.

I SEND you four quires of verse, which having sent, I

shall dismiss from my thoughts, and think no more of, till I see them in print. I have not after all found time or industry enough to give the last hand to the points. I believe, however, they are not very erroneous, though in so long a work, and in a work that requires nicety in this particular, some inaccuracies will escape. Where you find any, you will oblige me by correcting them.

In some passages, especially in the second book, you will observe me very satirical. Writing on such subjects I could not be otherwise. I can write nothing without aiming at least at usefulness. It were beneath my years to do it, and still more dishonourable to my religion. I know that a reformation of such abuses as I have censured is not to be expected from the efforts of a poet; but to contemplate the world, its follies, its vices, its indifference to duty, and its strenuous attachment to what is evil, and not to reprehend were to approve it. From this charge at least I shall be clear, for I have neither tacitly nor expressly flattered either its characters or its customs. I have paid one, and only one compliment, which was so justly due, that I did not know how to withhold it, especially having so fair an occasion,—I forget myself, there is another in the first book to Mr Throckmorton,—but the compliment I mean is to Mr Smith. It is however so managed, that nobody but himself can make the application, and you, to whom I disclose the secret, a delicacy on my part, which so much delicacy on his obliged me to the observance of.

What there is of a religious tincture in the volume I have brown towards the end of it, for two reasons, first, that I might not revolt the reader at his entrance,—and secondly, that my best impressions might be made last. Were I to write as many volumes as Lope de Vega, or Voltaire, not one of them would be without this tincture. If the world like it not, so much the worse for them. I make all the concessions I can, that I may please them, but I will not please them at the expense of conscience.

My descriptions are all from nature. not one of them second-handed. My delineations of the heart are from my own experience. not one of them borrowed from books, or in the least degree conjectural. In my numbers, which I

have varied as much as I could, (for blank verse without variety of numbers is no better than bladder and string,) I have imitated nobody, though sometimes perhaps there may be an apparent resemblance, because at the same time that I would not imitate, I have not affectedly differed.

If the work cannot boast a regular plan, (in which respect however I do not think it altogether indefensible,) it may yet boast, that the reflections are naturally suggested always by the preceding passage, and that except the fifth book, which is rather of a political aspect, the whole has one tendency, to discountenance the modern enthusiasm after a London life, and to recommend rural ease and leisure, as friendly to the cause of piety and virtue.

If it pleases you I shall be happy, and collect from your pleasure in it an omen of its general acceptance

Yours my dear friend

W C

CCCIV

INTENTION OF COMPLETING HIS POEM ON SCHOOL- EDUCATION, AND DEDICATING IT TO MR. UNWIN—DOUBTS CONCERNING A PUBLISHER PROPOSED—CORRECTIONS EXAMINED—MRS. POW LEY'S ILLNESS.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 20, 1784

YOUR letter has relieved me from some anxiety, and given me a good deal of positive pleasure. I have faith in your judgment, and in implicit confidence in the sincerity of your approbation. The writing of so long a poem is a serious business, and the author must know little of his own heart, who does not in some degree suspect himself of partiality to his own production, and who is he that would not be mortified by the discovery, that he had written five thousand lines in vain? The poem however which you have in hand will not of itself make a volume so large as the list, or as a bookseller would wish. I say this, because when I had sent Johnson five thousand verses, he applied for a thousand more. Two years since I began a piece

which grew to the length of two hundred, and there stopped. I have lately resumed it, and (I believe) shall finish it. But the subject is fruitful, and will not be comprised in a smaller compass than seven or eight hundred verses. It turns on the question, whether an education at school or at home be preferable, and I shall give the preference to the latter. I mean that it shall pursue the track of the former,—that is to say, that it shall visit Stock in its way to publication. My design also is to inscribe it to you. But you must see it first, and if, after having seen it, you should have any objection, though it should be no bigger than the title of an *æ*, I will deny myself that pleasure, and find no fault with your refusal. I have not been without thoughts of adding John Gilpin at the tail of all. He has made a good deal of noise in the world, and perhaps it may not be amiss to show, that though I write generally with a serious intention, I know how to be occasionally merry. The Critical Reviewers charged me with an attempt at humour. John having been more celebrated upon the score of humour than most pieces that have appeared in modern days, may serve to exonerate me from the imputation. but in this article I am entirely under your judgment, and mean to be set down by it. All these together will make an octavo like the last. I should have told you, that the piece which now employs me, is in rhyme. I do not intend to write any more blank. It is more difficult than rhyme, and not so amusing in the composition. If, when you make the offer of my book to Johnson, he should stroke his chin, and look up to the ceiling and cry—“Humph!”—anticipate him (I beseech you) at once, by saying—“that you know I should be sorry that he should undertake for me to his own disadvantage, or that my volume should be in any degree pressed upon him. I make him the offer merely because I think he would have reason to complain of me if I did not.”—But that punctilio once satisfied, it is a matter of indifference to me what publisher sends me forth. If Longman should have difficulties, which is the more probable, as I understand from you that he does not in these cases see with his own eyes, but will consult a brother poet, take no pains to conquer them.

The idea of being hawked about, and especially of your being the hawker, is insupportable Nichols (I have heard) is the most learned printer of the present day He may be a man of taste as well as of learning, and I suppose that you would not want a gentleman usher to introduce you He prints the Gentleman's Magazine, and may serve us, if the others should decline, if not, give yourself no further trouble about the matter I may possibly envy authors, who can afford to publish at their own expense, and in that case should write no more But the mortification would not break my heart

I proceed to your corrections, for which I most unaffectedly thank you, adverting to them in their order

Page 140 — Truth generally, without the article *the*, would not be sufficiently defined There are many sorts of truth, philosophical, mathematical, moral, &c, and a reader, not much accustomed to hear of religious or scriptural truth, might possibly, and indeed easily doubt what truth was particularly intended I acknowledge that *grace*, in my use of the word, does not often occur in poetry So neither does the subject which I handle Every subject has its own terms, and religious ones take theirs with most propriety from the Scripture thence I take the word *grace* The sarcastic use of it in the mouths of infidels I admit, but not their authority to proscribe it, especially as God's favour in the abstract has no other word, in all our language, by which it can be expressed

Page 150 *Impress the mind faintly, or not at all* — I prefer this line, because of the interrupted run of it, having always observed that a little unevenness of this sort, in a long work, has a good effect,—used, I mean, sparingly, and with discretion

Page 127 — This should have been noted first, but was overlooked

My sentiments on the subject of Charles's decollation are peculiar, at least I believe they are so I think it was a good deed, but ill done, that his life was forfeited, but taken away upon wrong motives But my notions being peculiar are for that reason better suppressed, and I am indebted to you for the hint Be pleased therefore to alter for me thus,

with the difference of only one word from the alteration proposed by you,—

We too are friends to royalty. We love,
The king who loves the law, respects his bounds,
And reigns content within them

You observed probably, in your second reading, that I allow the life of an animal to be fairly taken away, when it interferes either with the interest or convenience of man. Consequently snails, and all reptiles that spoil our crops, either of fruit, or grain, may be destroyed, if we can catch them. It gives me real pleasure, that Mrs Unwin so rapidly understood me. Blank verse, by the unusual arrangement of the words, and by the frequent infusion of one line into another, not less than by the style, which requires a kind of tragical magnificence, cannot be chargeable with much obscurity,—must rather be singularly perspicuous,—to be so easily comprehended. It is my labour and my principal one, to be as clear as possible. You do not mistake me, when you suppose that I have a great respect for the virtue that flies temptation. It is that sort of prowess which the whole strain of Scripture calls upon us to manifest, when assailed by sensual evil. Interior mischiefs must be grappled with. There is no flight from them. But solicitations to sin, that address themselves to our bodily senses, are, I believe, seldom conquered in any other way.

In the introduction to the art of cucumber-raising, in the third book, I might beg you to substitute gnats for fleas. I need not tell you why.

Your mother also has had a letter from Mrs. Powley, in which she gives a particular account of her illness, and of the consolation she received in the course of it. It was equally refreshing to your mother, who, upon the strength of such pleasing evidence of her interests in a better world, could have made a cheerful surrender of her into the hands of her heavenly Father, had he seen good to take her.

We have to trouble you yet once again in the marketing way. I want a yard of green satin, to front a winter under waistcoat, and your mother a compound of prepared hartshorn. Being tolerably honest folks, it is probable that we

shall some time or other pay you all our debts. These and the cream-pot may all come together by the waggon.

I can easily see that you may have very reasonable objections to my dedicatory proposal. You are a clergyman, and I have banged your order. You are a child of *Alma Mater*, and I have banged her too. Lay yourself therefore under no constraints that I do not lay you under, but consider yourself as perfectly free.

With our best love to you all, I bid you heartily farewell. I am tired of this endless scribblement. Adieu!

Yours, W. C.

CCCV

**SANDWICH ISLANDERS—KNOX'S ESSAYS—FIRST
MENTION TO MR. NEWTON OF THE TASK**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oct. 30, 1781

I ACCIDE most readily to the justness of your remark on the subject of the truly Roman heroism of the Sandwich islanders. Proofs of such prowess I believe are seldom exhibited by a people who have attained to a high degree of civilization. Refinement and profligacy of principle are too nearly allied, to admit of any thing so noble. And I question whether any instances of faithful friendship, like that which so much affected you in the behaviour of the poor savage, were produced even by the Romans themselves, in the latter days of the empire. They *had* been a nation whose virtues it is possible not to wonder at. But Greece, which was to them, what France is to us, a Pandora's box of mischief, reduced them to her own standard, and they naturally soon sunk still lower. Religion in this case seems pretty much out of the question. To the production of such heroism, undebauched nature herself equal. When Italy was a land of heroes, she knew no more of the true God than her cisibéas and her fiddler know now, and indeed it seems a matter of indifference, whether a man be born under a truth which does not influence him, or under the actual influence of a lie, or whether there be any difference between the two cases, it seems to

be rather in favour of the latter; for a false persuasion, (such as the Mahometan for instance,) may animate the courage, and furnish motives for the contempt of death, while despisers of the true religion are punished for their folly by being abandoned to the last degrees of depravity. Accordingly we see a Sandwich islander sacrificing himself to his dead friend, and our Christian seamen and mariners, instead of being impressed by a sense of his generosity, butchering him with a persevering cruelty that will disgrace them for ever, for he was a defenceless, unresisting enemy, who meant nothing more than to gratify his love for the deceased. To slay him in such circumstances was to murder him, and with every aggravation of the crime that can be imagined.

I am now reading a book which you have never read, and will probably never read. Knox's Essays. Perhaps I should praise, that I am driven to such reading by the want of books that would please me better, neither having any, nor the means of procuring any. I am not sorry, however, that I have not withheld, though when I have allowed him the praise of being a sensible man, and in *his* way a good one, I have allowed him all that I can afford. Neither his style pleases me, which is sometimes insufferably dry and hard, and sometimes ornamented even to an African tawdriness: nor his manner, which is never lively without being the worse for it: so unhappy is he in his attempts at character and narration. But writing chiefly on the manners, vices, and follies of the modern day, to me he is at least so far useful, as that he gives me information upon points concerning which I neither *can* or *would* be informed except by hearsay. Of such information, however I have need, being a writer upon those subjects myself, and a satirical writer too. It is fit, therefore, in order that I may find fault in the right place, that I should know where fault may properly be found.

I am a gun at Johnson's in the shape of a poem in blank verse, consisting of six books, and called the Task. I began it about this time twelvemonth, and writing sometimes an hour in a day, sometimes half a one, and sometimes two hours, have lately finished it. I mentioned it not sooner,

because almost to the last I was doubtful whether I should ever bring it to a conclusion, working often in such distress of mind, as, while it spurred me to the work, at the same time threatened to disqualify me for it. My bookseller I suppose will be as tardy as before. I do not expect to be born into the world till the month of March, when I and the crocuses shall peep together. You may assure yourself that I shall take my first opportunity to wait on you. I mean likewise to gratify myself by obtruding my Muse upon Mr. Bacon.

Adieu, my dear friend ! we are well, and love you
Yours, and Mrs. Newton's, W C

CCCVI.

**GLAD THAT JOHNSON HAS UNDERTAKEN THE
PUBLICATION—REASONS FOR KEEPING HIS WORK
SECRET A WHILE—TIROCIINIUM.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 1, 1784

WERE I to delay my answer, I must yet write without a frank at last, and may as well therefore write without one now, especially feeling, as I do, a desire to thank you for your friendly offices so well performed. I am glad for your sake, as well as for my own, that you succeeded in the first instance, and that the first trouble proved the last. I am willing too to consider Johnson's readiness to accept a second volume of mine, as an argument that at least he was no loser by the former, I collect from it some reasonable hope that the volume in question may not wrong him neither. My imagination tells me, (for I know you interest yourself in the success of my productions,) that your heart fluttered when you approached his door, and that it felt itself discharged of a burthen when you came out again. You did well to mention it at the Thorntons, they will now know that you do not pretend to a share in my confidence, what ever be the value of it, greater than you actually possess. I wrote to Mr. Newton by the last post, to inform him that I was gone to the press again. He will be surprised, and perhaps not pleased. but I think he cannot complain,

for he keeps his own authorly secrets without participating them with me. I do not think myself in the least degree injured by his reserve, neither should I, were he to publish a whole library without favouring me with any previous notice of his intentions. In these cases it is no violation of the laws of friendship not to communicate, though there must be a friendship where the communication is made. But many reasons may concur in disposing a writer to keep his work a secret, and none of them injurious to his friends. The influence of one I have felt myself, for which none of them would blame me,—I mean the desire of surprising agreeably. And if I have denied myself this pleasure in your instance, it was only to give myself a greater, by eradicating from your mind any little weeds of suspicion, that might still remain in it, that any man living is nearer to me than yourself. Had not this consideration forced up the lid of my strong box like a lever, it would have kept its contents with an inviolable closeness to the last, and the first news that either you or any of my friends would have had of the *Task*, they would have received from the public papers. But you know now, that neither as poet, nor as man, do I give to any man a precedence in my estimation at your expense. I am proceeding with my new work (which at present I feel myself much inclined to call by the name of *Tirocinium*) as fast as the Muse permits. It has reached the length of seven hundred lines, and will probably receive an addition of two or three hundred more. When you see Mr. Smith, perhaps you will not find it difficult to procure from him half a dozen franks, addressed to yourself, and dated the fifteenth of December, in which case, they will all go to the post filled with my lucubrations, on the evening of that day. I do not name an earlier, because I hate to be hurried, and Johnson cannot want it sooner than, thus managed, it will reach him.

I am not sorry that John Gilpin, though hitherto he has been nobody's child, is likely to be owned at last. Here and there I can give him a touch that I think will mend him, the language in some places not being quite so quaint and old-fashioned as it should be, and in one of the stan-

as there is a false rhyme When I have thus given the finishing stroke to his figure, I mean to grace him with two mottoes, a Greek and a Latin one, which, when the world shall see that I have only a little one of three words to the volume itself, and none to the books of which it consists, they will perhaps understand as a stricture upon that pompous display of literature, with which some authors take occasion to crowd their titles Knox, in particular, who is a sensible man too, has not, I think, fewer than half a dozen to his Essays

Adieu,

W C

CCCVII

COMMUNICATING THE PURPORT OF HIS TIROCINIUM, AND ASKING FOR A MOTTO TO IT.

TO THE REV WILLIAM BULL.

MY GOOD FRIEND,

Nov 8, 1784

THE Task, as you know, is gone to the press since it went I have been employed in writing another poem, which I am now transcribing, and which, in a short time, I design shall follow It is intituled, Tirocinium, or a Review of Schools, the business and purpose of it are, to censure the want of discipline, and the scandalous inattention to morals, that obtain in them, especially in the largest, and to recommend private tuition as a mode of education preferable on all accounts, to call upon fathers to become tutors of their own sons, where that is practicable, to take home a domestic tutor where it is not, and if neither can be done, to place them under the care of such a man as he to whom I am writing, some rural parson, whose attention is limited to a few

Now what want I?—A motto I have taken mottoes from Virgil and Horace till I begin to fear lest the world should discover (what indeed is the case) that I have no other authors of the Roman class Find me one therefore in any of your multitudinous volumes, no matter whether it be taken from Burgersdicius, Bogtrotius or Puddengulpius, the more recondite the better, the world will suppose that at least I am familiar with the author whom I quote, and though the supposition will be an erroneous one, it will do them no harm, and me some good.

When you have found it, bring it with you, either to-morrow, Saturday, or Monday. One of those three days you and your son must dine with us. Choose, and let us know which you choose, in an answer by the bearer.

Yours, with our joint love to Mrs. Bull,
WM. COWPER

CCCVIII

SENDING A SPECIMEN OF THE TASK.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 27, 1784

ALL the interest that you take in my new publication, and all the pleas that you urge in behalf of your right to my confidence, the moment I had read your letter, struck me as so many proofs of your regard, of a friendship, in which distance and time make no abatement. But it is difficult to adjust opposite claims to the satisfaction of all parties. I have done my best, and must leave it to your candour to put a just interpretation upon all that has passed, and to give me credit for it, as a certain truth, that whatever seeming defects, in point of attention and attachment to you, my conduct on this occasion may have appeared to have been chargeable with, I am in reality as clear of all real ones as you would wish to find me.

I send you enclosed, in the first place, a copy of the advertisement to the reader, which accounts for my title, not otherwise easily accounted for;—secondly, what is called an argument, or a summary of the contents of each book, more circumstantial and diffuse by far than that which I have sent to the press. It will give you a pretty accurate acquaintance with my matter, though the tenors and joints, by which the several passages are connected, and set into each other, cannot be explained in a syllabus;—and lastly, an extract, as you desired. The subject of it I am sure will please you, and as I have admitted into my description no images but what are scriptural, and have named as exactly as I could at the plain and simple sublimity of the scripture language, I have hopes the manner of it may please you too. As far as the numbers and diction

are concerned, it may serve pretty well for a sample of the whole. But the subjects being so various, no single passage can in all respects be a specimen of the book at large.

My principal purpose is to allure the reader, by character, by scenery, by imagery, and such political embellishments, to the reading of what may profit him. Subordinately to this, to combat that predilection in favour of a metropolis, that beggars and exhausts the country, by evacuating it of all its principal inhabitants : and collaterally, and as far as is consistent with this double intention, to have a stroke at vice, vanity and folly, wherever I find them. I have not spared the Universities. A letter which appeared in the General Evening Post of Saturday, said to have been received by a general officer, and by him sent to the press, as worthy of public notice, and which has all the appearance of authenticity, would alone justify the severest censure of those bodies, if any such justification were wanted. By way of supplement to what I have written on this subject, I have added a poem, called *Tirocinium*, which is in rhyme. It treats of the scandalous relaxation of discipline, that obtains in almost all schools universally, but especially in the largest, which are so negligent in the article of morals, that boys are debauched in general the moment they are capable of being so. It recommends the office of tutor to the father, where there is no real impediment, the expedient of a domestic tutor, where there is, and the disposal of boys into the hands of a respectable country clergyman who limits his attention to two, in all cases where they can not be conveniently educated at home. Mr Unwin happily affording me an instance in point, the poem is inscribed to him. You will now I hope command your hunger to be patient, and be satisfied with the luncheon that I send, till dinner comes. That piecemeal perusal of the work, sheet by sheet, would be so disadvantageous to work itself, and therefore so uncomfortable to me, that I dare say, you will waive your desire of it. A poem thus disjointed, cannot possibly be fit for any body's inspection but the author's.

Tully's rule—" *Nulla dies sine linea* "—will make a volume in less time than one would suppose. I adhered to it as rigidly, that though more than once I found three lines as

many as I had time to compass, still I wrote ; and finding occasionally, and as it might happen, a more fluent vein, the abundance of one day made me amends for the barrenness of another But I do not mean to write blank verse again Not having the music of rhyme, it requires so close an attention to the pause and the cadence, and such a peculiar mode of expression, as render it, to me at least, the most difficult species of poetry that I have ever meddled with.

I am obliged to you, and to Mr Bacon, for your kind remembrance of me when you meet No artist can excel as he does, without the finest feelings, and every man that has the finest feelings is, and must be, amiable

Adieu, my dear friend !

Affectionately yours,

W C

CCCIX

MR. NEWTON'S WISH TO SEE THE PROOF SHEETS OF THE TASK—REASONS FOR NOT ACCEDING TO IT—PICTURE OF LUNARDI

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Nov 29, 1784

I AM happy that you are pleased, and accept it as an earnest that I shall not, at least, disgust the public For though I know your partiality to me, I know at the same time with what laudable tenderness you feel for your own reputation, and that for the sake of that most delicate part of your property, though you would not criticise me with an unfriendly and undue severity, you would however beware of being satisfied too hastily, and with no warrantable cause for being so I called you the tutor of your two sons, in contemplation of the certainty of that event, and accounting it no violation of truth to assert *that* as true to-day which will be so to-morrow It is a fact in suspense, not in fiction

My principal errand to you now is to give you information on the following subject The moment Mr. Newton knew, (and I took care that he should learn it first from me,)

that I communicated to you what I had concealed from him, and that you were my authorship's go-between with Johnson on this occasion, he sent me a most friendly letter indeed, but one in every line of which I could hear the soft murmur of something like mortification, that could not be entirely suppressed. It contained nothing, however, that you yourself would have blamed, or that I had not every reason to consider as evidence of his regard to me. He concluded the subject with desiring to know something of my plan, to be favoured with an extract by way of specimen, or, (which he should like better still,) with wishing me to order Johnson to send him a proof as fast as they were printed off. Determining not to accede to this last request for many reasons, (but especially because I would no more show my poem piecemeal, than I would my house if I had one, the merits of the structure, in either case, being equally liable to suffer by such a partial view of it,) I have endeavoured to compromise the difference between us, and to satisfy him without disgracing myself. The proof-sheets I have absolutely, though civilly refused. But I have sent him a copy of the arguments of each book, more dilated and circumstantial than those inserted in the work, and to these I have added an extract as he desired, selecting as most suited to his taste, — The view of the restoration of all things—which you recollect to have seen near the end of the last book. I hold it necessary to tell you this, lest, if you should call upon him, he should startle you by discovering a degree of information upon the subject, which you could not otherwise know how to reconcile, or to account for.

You have executed your commissions *à merveille*. We not only approve, but admire. No apology was wanting for the balance struck at the bottom, which we accounted rather a beauty than a deformity. Pardon a poor poet, who cannot speak even of pounds, shillings, and pence, but in his own way.

I have read Lunardi with pleasure. He is a lively, sensible young fellow, and I suppose a very favourable sample of the Italians. When I look at his picture, I can fancy that I see in him that good sense and courage that no

doubt were legible in the face of a young Roman two thousand years ago

Your affectionate,

W C

CCCX.

**DEFENDING THE TITLE OF THE TASK, AND
THOSE OF ITS SEPARATE BOOKS.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 11, 1784.

HAVING imitated no man, I may reasonably hope that I shall not incur the disadvantage of a comparison with my betters Milton's manner was peculiar So is Thomson's He that should write like either of them, would, in my judgment, deserve the name of a copyist, but not of a poet. A judicious and sensible reader therefore, like yourself, will not say that my manner is not good, because it does not resemble theirs, but will rather consider what it is in itself Blank verse is susceptible of a much greater diversification of manner, than verse in rhyme and why the modern writers of it have all thought proper to cast their numbers alike, I know not Certainly it was not necessity that compelled them to it I flatter myself however that I have avoided that sameness with others, which would entitle me nothing but a share in one common oblivion with them all It is possible that, as the reviewer of my former volume found cause to say that he knew not to what class of writers to refer me, the reviewer of this, whosoever he shall be, may see occasion to remark the same singularity At any rate, though as little apt to be sanguine as most men, and more prone to fear and despond, than to overrate my own productions, I am persuaded that I shall not forfeit any thing by this volume that I gained by the last

As to the title, I take it to be the best that is to be had It is not possible that a book, including such a variety of subjects, and in which no particular one is predominant, should find a title adapted to them all In such a case, it seemed almost necessary to accommodate the name to the

incident that gave birth to the poem, nor does it appear to me, that because I performed more than my task, therefore the Task is not a suitable title. A house would still be a house, though the builder of it should make it ten times as big as he at first intended. I might indeed, following the example of the Sunday newsmonger, call it the *Obit*. But I should do myself wrong, for though it has much variety, it has, I trust, no confusion.

For the same reason none of the interior titles apply themselves to the contents at large of that book to which they belong. They are, every one of them, taken either from the leading, (I should say the introductory,) passage of that particular book, or from that which makes the most conspicuous figure in it. Had I set off with a design to write upon a gridiron, and had I actually written near two hundred lines upon that utensil, as I have upon the Sofa, the Gridiron should have been my title. But the Sofa, being, as I may say, the starting-post from which I addressed myself to the long race that I soon conceived a design to run, it acquired a just pre-eminence in my account, and was very worthily advanced to the titular honour it enjoys, its right being at least so far a good one, that no word in the language could pretend a better.

The *Time-piece* appears to me, (though by some accident the import of that title has escaped you,) to have a degree of propriety beyond the most of them. The book to which it belongs is intended to strike the hour that gives notice of approaching judgment, and dealing pretty largely in the *signs* of the *times*, seems to be denominated, as it is, with a sufficient degree of accommodation to the subject.

As to the word *worm*, it is the very appellation which Milton himself, in a certain passage of the *Paradise Lost*, gives to the serpent. Not having the book at hand, I cannot now refer to it; but I am sure of the fact. I am mistaken, too, if Shakspear's *Cleopatra* do not call the asp, by which she thought fit to destroy herself, by the same name. But not having read the play these five-and-twenty years, I will not affirm it. They are, however, without all doubt, convertible terms. A worm is a small serpent, and serpent is a large worm.

And when an epithet significant of the most terrible species of those creatures is adjoined, the idea is surely sufficiently ascertained. No animal of the vermicular or serpentine kind is crested, but the most formidable of all

We do not often see, or rather feel, so severe a frost before Christmas. Unexpected, at least by me, it had like to have been too much for any greenhouse, my myrtles having found themselves yesterday morning in an atmosphere so cold that the mercury was fallen eight degrees below the freezing point

We are truly sorry for Mrs Newton's indisposition, and shall be glad to hear of her recovery. We are most liable to colds at this season, a cold is most difficult to cure

Be pleased to remember us to the young ladies, and to all under your roof and elsewhere, who are mindful of us. And believe me

Your affectionate WM COWPER

Your letters are gone to their address. The oysters were very good.

CCCXI

INSCRIPTION OF TIROCINIUM—REASON FOR COMPLIMENTING BISHOP BAGOT—MR. NEWTON HURT CONCERNING THE TASK.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 18, 1784

I CONDOLE with you, that you had the trouble to ascend St Paul's in vain, but at the same time congratulate you, that you escaped an ague. I should be very well pleased to have a fair prospect of a Balloon under sail, with a philosopher or two on board, but at the same time should be very sorry to expose myself, for any length of time, to the rigour of the upper regions, at this season, for the sake of it. The travellers themselves, I suppose, are secured from all injuries of the weather by that fervency of spirit and agitation of mind, which must needs accompany them in their flight, advantages, which the more composed and phlegmatic spectator is not equally possessed of

The inscription of the poem is more your own affair than any other person's. You have therefore an undoubted right to fashion it to your mind, nor have I the least objection to the slight alteration that you have made in it. I inserted what you have erased for a reason that was perhaps rather chimerical than solid. I feared, however, that the Reviewers, or some of my very sagacious readers, not more merciful than they, might suspect that there was a secret design in the wind, and that author and friend had consulted in what manner author might best introduce friend to public notice, as a clergyman every way qualified to entertain a pupil or two, if peradventure any gentleman of fortune were in want of a tutor for his children. I therefore added the words—"And of his two sons only"—by way of insinuating, that you are perfectly satisfied with your present charge, and that you do not wish for more, thus meaning to obviate an illiberal construction, which we are both of us incapable of deserving. But the same caution not having appeared to you as necessary, I am very willing and ready to suppose that it is not, so.

I intended in my last to have given you my reasons for the compliment I have paid Bishop Bagot, lest, knowing that I have no personal connexion with him, you should suspect me of having done it rather too much at a venture. In the first place, then, I wished the world to know that I have no objection to a bishop, *quid* bishop. In the second place the brothers were all five my schoolfellows, and very amiable and valuable boys they were. Thirdly, Lewis, the bishop, had been rudely and coarsely treated in the Monthly Review, on account of a sermon, which appeared to me, when I read their extract from it, to deserve the highest commendations, as exhibiting explicit proof both of his good sense, and his unfeigned piety. For these causes me thereunto moving, I felt myself happy in an opportunity to do public honour to a worthy man, who had been publicly traduced, and indeed the reviewers themselves have since repented of their aspersions, and have travelled not a little out of their way in order to retract them, having taken occasion by the sermon preached at the bishop's visitation at Norwich, to say every thing handsome of his lordship,

who, whatever might be the merit of the^c discourse, in that instance, at least, could himself lay claim to no other than that of being a hearer

Since I wrote, I have had a letter from Mr Newton, that did not please me, and returned an answer to it, that possibly may not have pleased him His was fretful and peevish and mine, if not chargeable with exactly the same qualities, was however dry and unsavoury enough We shall come together again soon, I suppose, upon as amicable terms as usual but at present he is in a state of mortification He would have been pleased, had the book passed out of his hands into yours, or even out of yours into his, so that he had previously had opportunity to advise a measure which I pursued without his recommendation, and had seen the poems in manuscript But my design was to pay you a whole compliment, and I have done it If he says more on the subject, I shall speak freely, and perhaps please him less than I have done already

We wished to have thanked you sooner for three fine cod, with shrimps and oysters all excellent in their way but knew not where a letter might find you

Yours with love to all,

W C

CCCXII

**A FRAGMENT—EPITAPH ON DR JOHNSON—MR
PAGE'S REMOVAL FROM OLNEY.**

1785.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

Jan 5, 1785

* * * * *

I have observed, and you must have had occasion to observe it oftener than I, that when a man, who once seemed to be a Christian, has put off that character, and resumed his old one, he loses, together with the grace which seemed to possess, the most amiable part of the character that he resumes The best features of his natural face seem to be struck out, that, after having worn religion only as a handsome mask, he may make a more disgusting appearance than he did before he assumed it.

According to your request, I subjoin my Epitaph on Dr Johnson ; at least I mean to do it, if a drum, which at this moment announces the arrival of a giant in the town, will give me leave I have not yet sent the copy to the Magazine

EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON

Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred may well make England proud ;
Whose prose was eloquence by wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle or virtuous thought ;
Whose verse may claim grave, masculine, and strong
Superior praise to the mere poet's song ;
Who many a noble gift from Heaven possessed
And faith at last—alone worth all the rest.
Oh man immortal, dy a double prize
On earth by fame, by favour in the skies

Mr Page has quitted the country, having neither left admirers behind him, nor taken any with him , unless perhaps his wife be one, which admits some doubt He quarrelled with most of his acquaintance, and the rest grew sick of him Even his friend Maurice Smith was of this number He even quarrelled with his auctioneer in the midst of the sale of his goods, and would not permit him to proceed, finishing that matter himself He took leave of his audience in these words , “And now let us pray for your wicked Vicar.” Yours, WM COWPER

CCCXIII

MR. NEWTON'S FEELINGS CONCERNING THE TASK
—EPITAPH ON DR. JOHNSON—BALLOONS

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, Jan. 15, 1785

YOUR letters are always welcome You can always either find something to say, or can amuse me and yourself with a sociable and friendly way of saying nothing I never found that a letter was the more easily written, because the writing of it had been long delayed On the contrary, experience has taught me to answer soon, that I may do it without difficulty It is in vain to wait for an accumulation of materials in a situation such as yours and mine, produc

tive of few events. At the end of our expectations we shall find ourselves as poor as at the beginning.

I can hardly tell you with any certainty of information upon that terms Mr Newton and I may be supposed to stand at present. A month, I believe, has passed since I heard from him. But my *friseur* having been in London in the course of this week, whence he returned last night, and having called at Hoxton, brought me his love, and an excuse for his silence, which (he said) had been occasioned by the frequency of his preachings at this season. He was not pleased that my manuscript was not first transmitted to him, and I have cause to suspect that he was even mortified at being informed, that a certain inscribed poem was not inscribed to himself. But we shall jumble together again, as people that have an affection for each other at bottom, notwithstanding now and then a slight disagreement, always do.

I know not whether Mr Smith has acted in consequence of your hint, or whether, not needing one, he transmitted to us his bounty, before he had received it. He has however, sent us a note for twenty pounds, with which we have performed wonders, in behalf of ragged and the starved. He is a most extraordinary young man, and though I shall probably never see him, will always have a niche in the museum of my reverential remembrance.

The death of Dr Johnson has set a thousand scribblers to work, and me among the rest. While I lay in bed, waiting till I could reasonably hope that the parlour might be ready for me, I invoked the Muse, and composed the following

EPITAPH

Here Johnson lies—a sage, by all allow'd,
Whom to have bred, may well make England proud ;
Whose prose was Eloquence, by Wisdom taught,
The graceful vehicle of virtuous thought ,
Whose verse may claim grave, masculine, and strong,
Superior praise to the mere poet's song ;
How many a noble gift from Heav'n possess'd,
And faith at last, alone worth all the rest.
O man, immortal by a double prize,
By fame on earth, by glory in the skies !

It is destined, I believe, to the Gentleman's Magazine, which I consider as a respectable repository for small matters, which, when entrusted to a newspaper, can expect but the duration of a day. But Nichols having at present a small piece of mine in his hands, not yet printed,—(it is called the Poplar field, and I suppose you have it,)—I wait till his obstetrical aid has brought that to light, before I send him a new one. In his last he published my epitaph upon 'Tiney which, I likewise imagine, has been long in your collection.

Not a word yet from Johnson. I am easy, however, upon that subject, being assured that so long as his own interest is at stake, he will not want a monitor to remind him of the proper time to publish.

You and your family have our sincere love. Forget not to present my respectful compliments to Miss Unwin, and, if you have not done it already, thank her on my part for the very agreeable narrative of Lunardi. He is a young man, I presume, of great good sense and spirit, (his letters, at least, and his enterprising turn, bespeak him such,) a man qualified to shine not only among the stars, but in the more useful, though humbler sphere of terrestrial occupation.

I have been crossing the channel in a balloon, ever since I read of that achievement by Blanchard. I have an insatiable thirst to know the philosophical reason, why his vehicle had like to have fallen into the sea, when, for aught that appears, the gas was not at all exhausted. Did not the extreme cold condense the inflammable air, and cause the globe to collapse? Tell me, and be my Apollo for ever!

Affectionately yours, W C

CCCXIV
**IMPRISONED FIRST BY FROST, AND NOW
BY THAW—POLITICS.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Jap. 22, 1785

THE departure of the long frost, by which we were pinched and squeezed together for three weeks, is a most agreeable circumstance. The weather is now (to speak

poetically) genial and jocund ; and the appearance of the sun, after so tedious an eclipse, peculiarly welcome. For were it not that I have a gravel-walk about sixty yards long, where I take my daily exercise, I should be obliged to look at a fine day through the window, without any other enjoyment of it ;—a country rendered impassable by frost, that has been at last resolved into rottenness, keeps me so close a prisoner. Long live the inventors and improvers of balloons ! It is always clear overhead, and by and by we shall use no other road.

How will the Parliament employ themselves when they meet ?—to any purpose, or to none, or only to a bad one ? They are utterly out of my favour. I despair of them altogether. Will they pass an act for the cultivation of the royal wildernesses ? Will they make effectual provision for a northern fishery ? Will they establish a new sinking fund, that shall infallibly pry off the national debt ? I say nothing about a more equal representation, because, unless they bestow upon private gentlemen of no property a privilege of voting, I stand no chance of ever being represented myself. Will they achieve all these wonders, or none of them ? And shall I derive no other advantage from the great Witena-Gemot of the nation, than merely to their debates, for twenty folios of which I would not give one farthing ?

Yours, my dear friend,

WM COWPER

CCCXV

PRINTING OF THE TASK COMMENCED—HIS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE GENTLEMAN'S MAGAZINE—LORD ARCHIBALD HAMILTON WISHES TO BECOME ACQUAINTED WITH HIM—MR. TEEDON.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Feb 7, 1785

We live in a state of such uninterrupted retirement, in which incidents worthy to be recorded occur so seldom, that I always sit down to write with a discouraging conviction that I have nothing to say. The event commonly

justifies the presage. For when I have filled my sheet, I find that I have said nothing. Be it known to you, however, that I may now at least communicate a piece of intelligence to which you will not be altogether indifferent, that I have received, and revised, and returned to Johnson, the two first proofs sheets of my new publication. The business was dispatched indeed a fortnight ago, since when I have heard from him no further. From such a beginning, however, I venture to prognosticate the progress, and in due time the conclusion of the matter.

In the last Gentleman's Magazine my Poplar Field appears, I have accordingly sent up two pieces more,—a Latin translation of it, which you have never seen, and another on a Rosebud, the neck of which I inadvertently broke, which, whether you have seen or not, I know not. As fast as Nichols prints off the poems I send him, new ones. My remittance usually consists of two, and he publishes one of them at a time. I may indeed furnish him at this rate, without putting myself to any great inconvenience. For my last supply was transmitted to him in August and is but now exhausted.

I communicate the following anecdote at your mother's instance, who will suffer no part of my praise to be sunk in oblivion. A certain Lord Archibald Hamilton has hired the house of Mr Small at Clifton, in our neighbourhood, for a hunting seat. There he lives at present with his wife and daughter. They are an exemplary family in some respects, and I believe an amiable one in all. The Rev Mr Jones, the curate of that parish, who often dines with them by invitation on a Sunday, recommended my volume to their reading, and his lordship, after having perused a part of it, expressed to the said Mr Jones an ardent desire to be acquainted with the author, from motives which my great modesty will not suffer me to particularize. Mr Jones, however, like a wise man, informed his lordship, that for certain special reasons and causes I had declined going into company for many years, and that therefore he must not hope for my acquaintance. His lordship most civilly subjoined that he was very sorry for it.

"And is that all?" say you Now, were I to hear you say so, I should look foolish and say—"Yes"—But having you at a distance, I snap my fingers at you, and say—"No, that is not all" Mr. Teedon, who favours us now and then with his company in an evening, as usual, was not long since discoursing with that eloquence which is so peculiar to himself, on the many providential interpositions that had taken place in his favour "He had wished for many things (he said,) which, at the time when he formed those wishes, seemed distant and improbable, some of them indeed impossible Among other wishes that he had indulged, one was, that, he might be connected with men of genius and ability,—and in my connexion with this worthy gentleman, (said, he, turning to me,) that wish I am sure, is amply gratified" You may suppose that I felt the sweet gush out upon my forehead, when I heard this speech, and if you do, you will not be at all mistaken So much was I delighted with the delicacy of that incense

Thus far I proceeded easily enough, and here I laid down my open, and spent some minutes in recollection, endeavouring to find some subject, with which I might fill the little blank some subject But none presents itself Farewell therefore, and remember those who are mindful of you!

Present our love to all your comfortable fire side, and believe me ever most affectionately yours, W C

They that read Greek with the accents would pronounce the sin *oxew*, as an *n* But I do not hold with that practice, though educated in it I should therefore utter it just as I do the Latin word *filio*, taking the quantity for my guide

CCCXVI

OPINION OF THE GREAT—UNREASONABLENESS OF HIS OWN IMPATIENCE WITH THE PRINTER'S DELAY.

• TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

March 20, 1785.

I THANK you for your letter It made me laugh, and there are not many things capable of being contained with

in the dimensions of a letter, for which I see cause to be more thankful. I was pleased too to see my opinion of his Lordship's *nonchalance* upon a subject that you had so much at heart, completely verified. I do not know that the eye of a nobleman was ever dissected. I cannot help supposing however that, were that organ, as it exists in the head of such a personage, to be accurately examined, it would be found to differ materially in its construction from the eye of a commoner, so very different is the view of that men in an elevated, and in an humble station, have of the same object. What appears great, sublime, beautiful, and important, to you and to me, when submitted to the notice of my lord, or his grace, and submitted too with the utmost humility, is either too minute to be visible at all, or if seen, seems trivial, and of no account. My supposition therefore seems not altogether chimerical.

In two months I have corrected proof sheets to the amount of ninety-six pages, and no more. In other words, I have received three packets. Nothing is quick enough for impatience, and I suppose that the impatience of an author has the quickest of all possible movements. It appears to me however that at this rate we shall not publish till next autumn. Should you happen therefore to pass Johnson's door, pop in your head as you go, and just insinuate to him, that, were his remittances rather more frequent, that frequency would be no inconvenience to me. I much expected one this evening, a fortnight having now elapsed since the arrival of the last. But none came, and I felt myself a little mortified. I took up the newspaper however, and read it. There I found that the emperor and the Dutch are, after all their negotiations, going to war. Such reflections as these struck me. A great part of Europe is going to be involved in the greatest of all calamities—troops are in motion,—artillery is drawn together,—cabinets are busied in contriving schemes of blood and devastation,—thousands will perish, who are incapable of understanding the dispute, and thousands, who, whatever the event may be, are little more interested in it than myself, will suffer unspeakable hardships in the course of the quarrel;—Well! Mr. Poet, and how then? You have

composed certain verses, which you are desirous to see in print, and because the impression seems to be delayed, you are displeased, not to say dispirited.—be ashamed of yourself! you live in a world in which your feelings may find worthier subjects,—be concerned for the havoc of nations, and mourn over your retarded volume when you find a dearth of more important tragedies!

You postpone certain topics of conference to our next meeting. When shall it take place? I do not wish for you just now, because the garden is a wilderness, and so is all the country around us. In May we shall have asparagus, and plenty of cucumbers, and weather in which we may stroll to Weston, at least we may hope for it, therefore come in May, you will find us happy to receive you, and as much of your fair household as you can bring with you.

We are very sorry for your Uncle's indisposition. The approach of summer seems however to be much in his favour, that season being of all remedies for the rheumatism I believe the most effectual.

I thank you for your intelligence concerning the celebrity of John Gilpin. You may be sure that it was agreeable,—but your own feelings on occasion of that article pleased me most of all. Well my friend, be comforted! You had not an opportunity of saying publicly, "I know the Author." But the author himself will say as much for you soon, and perhaps will feel in doing so a gratification equal to your own.

In the affair of face-painting, I am precisely of your opinion. Adieu W C

CCCXVII

JOHN GILPIN—VANITY OF POPULAR APPLAUSE.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 22, 1785

When I received your account of the great celebrity of John Gilpin, I felt myself both flattered and grieved. Being man, and having in my composition all the ingredients of which other men are made, and vanity among the rest, it pleased me to reflect that I was on a sudden become so

famous, and that all the world was busy enquiring after me , but the next moment, recollecting my former self, and that thirteen years ago, as harmless as John's history is, I should not then have written it, my spirits sank, and I was ashamed of my success Your letter was followed the next post by one from Mr Unwin You tell me that I am rivalled by Mrs Bellamy , and he, that I have a competitor for fame, not less formidable, in the Learned Pig. Alas ! what is an author's popularity worth, in a world that can suffer a prostitute on one side, and a pig on the other, to eclipse his brightest glories ? I am therefore sufficiently humbled by these considerations , and unless I should hereafter be ordained to engross the public attention by means more magnificent than a song, am persuaded that I shall suffer no real detriment by their applause I have produced many things, under the influence of despair, which hope would not have permitted to spring. But if the soil of that melancholy, in which I have walked so long, has thrown up here and there an unprofitable fungus, it is well, at least, that it is not chargeable with having brought forth poison Like you, I see, or think I can see, that Gilpin may have his use Causes, in appearance trivial, produce often the most beneficial consequences , and perhaps my volumes may now travel to a distance, which, if they had not been ushered into the world by that notable horseman, they would never have reached

I hope that neither the master of St Paul's or any other school, who may have commenced my admirer on John's account, will write me for such a reason , yet a little while, and if they have laughed with me, their note will be changed, and perhaps they will revile me Tirocinium is no friend of theirs, on the contrary, if it have the effect I wish it to have, it will prove much their enemy , for it gives no quarter to modern pedagogues, but finding them all alike guilty of supineness and neglect in the affair of morals, condemns them, both schoolmasters and heads of colleges, without distinction Our temper differs somewhat from that of the ancient Jews They would neither dance nor weep We indeed weep not, if a man mourn unto us , but I must needs say, that, if he pipe, we seem disposed to

dance with the greatest alacrity I ought to tell you that this remark has a reference to John Gilpin, otherwise having been jumbled a little out of its place you might be at a loss for the explication

Yours,

W C

CCCXVIII

**THE MASTER OF ST. PAUL'S SCHOOL WISHES TO
WRITE TO THE AUTHOR OF JOHN GILPIN—MR.
NEWTON SATISFIED ABOUT THE TASK—OLD
ACQUAINTANCE—A BIRD'S NEST**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

April 30, 1785.

I RETURN you thanks for a letter so warm with the intelligence of the celebrity of John Gilpin I little thought, when I mounted him upon my Pegasus, that he would become so famous I have learned also, from Mr Newton, that he is equally renowned in Scotland, and that a lady there had undertaken to write a second part, on the subject of Mrs Gilpin's return to London, but not succeeding in it as she wished, she dropped it He tells me likewise, that the head master of St Paul's school, (who he is I know not,) has conceived, in consequence of the entertainment that John has afforded him, a vehement desire to write to me Let us hope he will alter his mind, for should we even exchange civilities upon the occasion, Trocimum will spoil all The great estimation however in which this knight of the stone-bottles is held, may turn out a circumstance propitious to the volume of which his history will make a part Those events that prove the prelude to our greatest success, are often apparently trivial in themselves, and such as seemed to promise nothing The disappointment that Horace mentions is reversed We design a mug, and it proves a hog'shead It is a little hard, that I alone should be unfurnished with a printed copy of this facetious story When you visit London next, you must buy the most elegant impression of it, and bring it with you I thank you also for writing to Johnson I likewise wrote to him myself Your letter and mine together have operated

to admiration. There needs nothing more but that the effect be lasting, and the whole will soon be printed. We now draw towards the middle of the fifth book of the Task. The man, Johnson, is like unto some vicious horses, that I have known. They would not budge till they were spurred, and when they were spurred, they would kick — So did he, his temper was somewhat disconcerted. but his pace was quickened, and I was contented.

I was very much pleased with the following sentence in Mr. Newton's last, — "I am perfectly satisfied with the propriety of your proceeding as to the publication." — Now therefore we are friends again. Now he once more enquires after the work, which, till he had disburthened himself of this acknowledgment, neither he nor I, in any of our letters to each other, ever mentioned. Some side-wind has wafted to him a report of those reasons by which I justified my conduct. I never made a secret of them, but both your mother and I have studiously deposited them with those who we thought were most likely to transmit them to him. They wanted only a hearing, which once obtained, their solidity and cogency were such that they were sure to prevail.

You mention Bensley. I formerly knew the man you mention, but his elder brother much better. We were school-fellows, and he was one of a club of seven Westminster men, to which I belonged, who dined together every Thursday. Should it please God to give me ability to perform the poet's part to some purpose, many whom I once called friends, but who have since treated me with a most magnificent indifference, will be ready to take me by the hand again, and some, whom I never held in that estimation, will, like Bensley, (who was but a boy when I left London,) boast of a connexion with me which they never had. Had I the virtues, and graces, and accomplishments of St. Paul himself, I might have them at Olney, and nobody would care a button about me, yourself and one or two more excepted. Fame begets favour, and one talent, if it be rubbed a little bright by use and practice, will procure a man more friends than a thousand virtues. Dr. Johnson, I remember in the life of

one of our poets, (I believe of Savage,) says, that he retired from the world, flattering himself that should be regretted. But the world never missed him I think his observation upon it is, that the vacancy made by the retreat of any individual is soon filled up, that a man may always be obscure, if he chooses to be so and that he, who neglects the world, will be by the world neglected

Your mother and I walked yesterday in the Wilderness. As we entered the gate, a glimpse of something white, contained in a little hole in the gate-post, caught my eye I looked again, and discovered a bird's nest, with two tiny eggs in it By and by they will be fledged, and tailed, and get wing-feathers, and fly My case is somewhat similar to that of the parent bird My nest is in a little nook Here I brood and hatch, and in due time my progeny takes wing and whistles.

We wait for the time of your coming with pleasant expectation.

Yours truly, W C

CCCXIX

**ACCOUNT OF A SUDDEN DEATH—HIS OWN
STATE OF MIND, AND PROVIDENTIAL CONNE-
XION WITH MR. NEWTON—JOHNSON THE BOOK-
SELLERS.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May, 1785

I DO not know that I shall send you news, but, whether it be news or not, it is necessary that I should relate the fact, lest I should omit an article of intelligence important at least at Olney The event took place much nearer to you than to us, and yet it is possible that no account of it may yet have reached you—Mr Ashburner, the elder, went to London on Tuesday se'nnight in perfect health and in high spirits, so as to be remarkably cheerful, and was brought home in a hearse the Friday following. Soon after his arrival in town, he complained of an acute pain in his elbow, then in his shoulder, then in both shoulders, was

blooded ; took two doses of such medicine as an apothecary thought might do him good , and died on Thursday, in the morning, at ten o'clock When I first heard the tidings, I could hardly credit them ; and yet have lived long enough myself to have seen manifold and most convincing proofs, that neither health, great strength, nor even youth itself, afford the least security from the stroke of death It is not common, however, for men at the age of the thirty-six to die so suddenly I saw him but a few days before, with a bundle of gloves and hatbands under his arm, at the door of Geary Ball, who lay at that time a corpse The following day, I saw him march before the coffin, and lead the procession that attended Geary to the grave He might be truly said to march, for his step was heroic, his figure athletic, and his countenance as firm and confident as if he had been born only to bury others, and was sure never to be buried himself Such he appeared to me, while I stood at the window and contemplated his deportment , and then he died

I am sensible of the tenderness and affectionate kindness with which you recollect our past intercourse, and express your hopes of my future restoration I, too, within the last eight months, have had my hopes, though they have been of short duration, cut off like the foam upon the waters Some previous adjustments, indeed, are necessary, before a lasting expectation of comfort can have place in me. There are those persuasions in my mind which either entirely forbid the entrance of hope, or, if it enter, immediately eject it They are incompatible with any such inmate, and must be turned out themselves before so desirable a guest can possibly have secure possession 'This, you say, will be done It may be, but it is not done yet, nor has a single step in the course of God's dealings with me been taken towards it If I mend, no creature ever mended so slowly that recovered at last I am like a slug or snail, that has fallen into a deep well slug as he is, he performs his descent with an alacrity proportioned to his weight, but he does not crawl up again quite so fast Mine was a rapid plunge , but my return to daylight, if I am indeed returning, is leisurely enough.—I wish you a swift

progress, and a pleasant one, through the great subject that you have in hand, and set that value upon your letters to which they are in themselves entitled, but which is certainly increased by that peculiar attention which the writer of them pays to me. Were I such as I once was, I should say that I have a claim upon your particular notice which nothing ought to supersede. Most of your other connexions you may fairly be said to have formed by your own act, but your connexion with me was the work of God. The kine that went up with the ark from Bethshemesh left what they loved behind them, in obedience to an impression which to them was perfectly dark and unintelligible. Your journey to Huntingdon was not less wonderful. He indeed, who sent you, knew well wherefore, but you knew not. But I am altered since that time, and if your affection for me had ceased, you might very reasonably justify your change by mine. I can say nothing for myself at present, but this I can venture to foretell, that should the restoration of which my friends assure me obtain, I shall undoubtedly love those who have continued to love me, even in a state of transformation from my former self, much more than ever. I doubt not that Nebuchadnezzar had friends in his prosperity, all kings have many. But when his nails became like eagles' claws, and he ate grass like an ox, I suppose he had few to pity him.

* * * * *

I am glad that Johnson is in fact a civiler man than I supposed him. My quarrel with him was not for any stricture of his upon my poetry, (for he has made several, and many of them have been judicious, and my work will be the better for them,) but for a certain rudeness with which he questioned my judgment of a writer of the last century, though I only mention the effect that his verses had upon me when a boy. There certainly was at the time a hustle in his temper, occasioned, I imagine, by my being a little importunate with him to proceed. He has however recovered himself since, and, except that the press seems to have stood still this last week, has printed as fast as I could wish. Had he kept the same pace from the beginning, the book had been published, as indeed it ought

to have been, three months ago. That evil report of his indolence reaches me from everybody that knows him, and is so general, that had I a work, or the publication of one in hand, the expenses of which I intended to take the hazard of upon myself, I should be very much afraid to employ him. He who will neglect himself cannot well be expected to attend to the interests of another.

We are going to pay Mr. Pomfret a morning visit. Our errand is to see a fine bed of tulips, a sight that I never saw. Fine painting, and God the artist.—Mrs Unwin has something to say in the cover. I leave her therefore to make her own courtesy, and only add that I am yours and Mrs. Newton's. Affectionate W.M. COWPER

CCCXX.

DESCRIPTION OF HIS SUMMER-HOUSE.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.,

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 25, 1785

I WRITE in a nook that I call my *Boudoir*. It is a summer-house not much bigger than a sedan chair, the door of which opens into the garden, that is now crowded with pinks, roses, and honey-suckles, and the window into my neighbour's orchard. It formerly served an apothecary, now dead, as a smoking-room, and under my feet is a trap-door, which once covered a hole in the ground, where he kept his bottles. At present, however, it is dedicated to sublimer uses. Having lined it with garden mats, and furnished it with a table and two chairs, here I write all that I write in summer-time, whether to my friends, or to the public. It is secure from all noise, and refuge from all intrusion, for intruders sometimes trouble me in the winter evenings at Olney. But (thanks to my *Boudoir*!) I can now hide myself from them. A poet's retreat is sacred. They acknowledge the truth of that proposition, and never presume to violate it.

The last sentence puts me in mind to tell you that I have ordered my volume to your door. My bookseller is the most dilatory of all his fraternity, or you would have

received it long since. It is more than a month since I returned him the last proof, and consequently since the printing was finished. I sent him the manuscript at the beginning of last November, that he might publish while the town was full,—and he will hit the exact moment when it is entirely empty. Patience (you will perceive) is in no situation exempted from the severest trials; a remark that may serve to comfort you under the numberless trials of your own.

W W

CCCXXI

**MR. NEWTON'S FLOCK AT OLNEY—GOD'S MEBOY—
HIS BOOK DELAYED IN THE PRESS—HE HOPES
NOT TO LIVE TILL BREECHES BECOME TOO
EXPENSIVE A LUXURY FOR HIM TO
AFFORD.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

June 25, 1785

A NOTE that we received from Mr. Scott, by your desire, informing us of the amendment of Mrs. Newton's health, demands our thanks, having relieved us from no little anxiety upon her account. The welcome purport of it was soon after confirmed by Sally Johnson, so that, at present, we feel ourselves at liberty to hope that by this time Mrs. Newton's recovery is complete. Sally's looks do credit to the air of Hoxton. She seems to have lost nothing, either in complexion or dimensions by her removal hence, and, which is still more to the credit of your great town, she seems in spiritual things also, to be the very same Sally whom we knew once at Olney. Situation, therefore, is nothing. They who have the means of grace, and a heart to use them, will thrive any where, others no where. More than a few, who were formerly ornaments of this garden when you once watered, here flourished, and here have seemed to wither. Others, transplanted into a soil apparently less favourable to their growth, either find the exchange an advantage, or at least are not impaired by it. Of myself, who had once both leaves and fruit, but who have now

neither, I say nothing, or only this,—That when I am overwhelmed with despair, I repine at my barrenness, and think it hard to be thus blighted: but when a glimpse of hope breaks in upon me, I am contented to be the sapless thing I am, knowing that He who has commanded me to wither, can command me to flourish again, when he pleases. My experiences, however, of this latter kind, are rare and transient. The light that reaches me cannot be compared either to that of the sun or of the moon. It is a flash in a dark night, during which the heavens seem opened only to shut again.

We enquired, but could not learn, that any thing memorable passed in the last moments of poor Nathan. I listened in expectation that he would at least acknowledge what all who knew him in his more lively days had so long seen and lamented, his neglect of the best things, and his eager pursuit of riches. But he was totally silent upon that subject. Yet it was evident that the cares of this world had choked in him much of the good seed, and that he was no longer the Nathan whom we have so often heard at the old house, rich in spirit, though poor in expression, whose desires were unutterable in every sense, both because they were too big for language, and because Nathan had no language for them. I believe with you, however, that he is safe at home. He had a weak head and strong passions, which He who made him well knew, and for which He would undoubtedly make great allowance. The forgiveness of God is large and absolute, so large, that though in general He calls for confession of our sins, He sometimes dispenses with that preliminary, and will not suffer even the delinquent himself to mention his transgression. He has so forgiven it, that He seems to have forgotten it too, and will have the sinner to forget it also. Such instances, perhaps, may not be common, but I know that there have been such, and it might be so with Nathan.

I know not what Johnson is about, neither do I now enquire. It will be a month to-morrow since I returned him the last proof. He might, I suppose, have published by this time, without hurrying himself into a fever, or breaking his neck through the violence of his dispatch. But having

never seen the book advertised, I conclude that he has not. Had the parliament risen at the usual time, he would have been just too late, and though it sits longer than usual, or is likely to do so, I should not wonder if he were too late at last. Dr Johnson laughs at Savage for charging the still-birth of a poem of his upon the bookseller's delay, yet when Dr Johnson had a poem of his own to publish, no man ever discovered more anxiety to meet the market. But I have taken thought about it, till I am grown weary of the subject, and at last have placed myself much at my ease upon the cushion of this one resolution, that if ever I have dealings hereafter with my present manager, we will proceed upon other terms.

Mr. Wright called here last Sunday, by whom Lord Dartmouth made obliging enquiries after the volume, and was pleased, to say that he was impatient to see it. I told him that I had ordered a copy to his Lordship, which I hoped he would receive if not soon, at least before he should retire into the country. I have also ordered one to Mr. Birham, and have many times blushed that I omitted to do so on the former occasion.

We suffer in this country very much by drought. The corn, I believe, is in most places thin, and the hay harvest amounts in some to not more than the fifth of a crop. Heavy taxes, excessive levies for the poor, and lean acres, have brought our farmers almost to their wits' end, and many, who are not farmers, are not very remote from the same point of despondency. I do not despond, because I was never much addicted to anxious thoughts about the future in respect of temporals. But I feel myself a little angry with a minister, who, when he imposed a tax upon gloves, was not ashamed to call them a luxury. Caps and boots lined with fur are not accounted a luxury in Russia, neither can gloves be reasonably deemed such in a climate sometimes hardly less severe than that. Nature, indeed, is content with little, and luxury seems, in some respect, rather relative, than of any fixed construction. Accordingly it may become, in time, a luxury for an Englishman to wear breeches, because it is possible to exist without them, and because persons of a moderate income

may find them too expensive. I hope, however, to be hid in the dust before that day shall come, for, having worn them so many years, if they be indeed a luxury, they are such a one as I could very ill spare, yet spare them I must, if I cannot afford to wear them.

We are tolerably well in health, and as to spirits, much as usual—seldom better, sometimes worse.

Yours, my dear friend, affectionately, WM COWPER

CCCXVII

**FEELINGS ON HIS DEPARTURE—A THUNDER-STORM
—MR. TEEDON—RELIGIOUS IMPRESSIONS**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

July 27, 1785

You and your party left me in a frame of mind that indisposed me much to company. I comforted myself with the hope that I should spend a silent day, in which I should find abundant leisure to indulge sensations which, though of the melancholy kind, I yet wished to nourish. But that proved vain. In less than an hour after your departure, Mr. Greateed made his appearance at the greenhouse door. We were obliged to ask him to dinner, and he dined with us. He is an agreeable, sensible, well-bred young man, but with all his recommendations I felt that on that occasion I could have spared him. So much better are the absent, whom we love much, than the present whom we love a little. I have however made myself amends since, and nothing else having interfered, have sent many a thought after you.

You had been gone two days when a violent thunder storm came over us. I was passing out of the parlour into the hall, with Mungo at my heels, when a flash seemed to fill the room with fire. In the same instant came the clap, so that the explosion was (I suppose) perpendicular to the roof. Mungo's courage upon the tremendous occasion constrained me to smile, in spite of the solemn impression that such an event never fails to affect me with,—the moment that he heard the thunder, (which was like the

burst of a great gun,) with a wrinkled forehead, and with eyes directed to the ceiling, whence the sound seemed to proceed, he barked, but he barked exactly in concert with the thunder. It thundered once, and he barked once, and so precisely in the very instant when the thunder happened, that both sounds seemed to begin and to end together. Some dogs will clap their tails close, and sneak into a corner, at such a time, but Mungo it seems is of a more fearless family. A house at no great distance from ours, was the mark to which the lightning was directed, it knocked down the chimney, split the building, and carried away the corner of the next house, in which lay a fellow drunk, and asleep upon his bed,—it roused and terrified him, and he promises to get drunk no more, but I have seen a woeful end of many such conversions. I remember but one such storm at Olney since I have known the place, and I am glad that it did not happen two days sooner for the sake of the ladies, who would probably, one of them at least, have been alarmed by it. You have left behind you Thomson's Seasons, and a bottle of harts horn. I will not promise that you shall ever see the latter again. Having a sore throat, I made free with part of it this morning, in the way of outward application, and we shall probably find a use for the remainder. The Seasons you shall have again.

I have received, since you went, two very flattering letters of thanks, one from Mr Bacon, and one from Mr Barham, such as might make a lean poet plump, and an humble poet proud. But being myself neither lean nor humble I know of no other effect that they had, than that they pleased me, and I communicate the intelligence to you, not without an assured hope that you will be pleased also. We are now going to walk, and thus far I have written before I have received your letter. Friday—I must now be as compact as possible. When I began, I designed four letters, but my packet being transformed into two single epistles, I can consequently afford you but three. I have filled a large sheet with animadversions upon Pope, and shall send it by Sunday's post, indifferent whether Nichols detects me or not. I am proceeding in my translation—

"*Velis et remis, omnibus nervis*"—as Hudibras has it ; and if God give me health and ability, will put it into your hands when I see you next

Your fish was good,—perfectly good, and we did not forget you in our cups The money was found, and not a farthing had eloped My hat is come, and we both admire it , but your mother's either was never sent, or sent the wrong way, for it has not reached us Tell John that I love him with all my heart for doing so much credit to his tutor, and to my public recommendation of the very plan upon which he is educated

Mr Teedon has just left us He has read my book, and, as it fearful that I had overlooked some of them myself, has pointed out to me all its beauties I do assure you the man has a very acute discernment, and a taste that I have no fault to find with. I hope that you are of the same opinion

Be not sorry that your love of Christ was excited in you by a picture Could a dog or a cat suggest to me the thought that Christ is precious, I would not despise that thought because a dog or cat suggested it The meanness of the instrument cannot debase the nobleness of the principle He that kneels before a picture of Christ, is an idolater but he in whose heart the sight of such a picture kindles a warm remembrance of the Saviour's sufferings, must be a Christian Suppose that I dream as Gardiner did, that Christ walks before me, that he turns and smiles upon me, and fills my soul with ineffable love and joy , Will a man tell me that I am deceived, that I ought not to love or rejoice in him for such a reason, because a dream is merely a picture drawn upon the imagination ? I hold not with such divinity To love Christ is the greatest dignity of man, be that affection wrought in him how it may

Adieu ! May the blessing of God be upon you all ! It is your mother's heart's wish and mine

Yours ever, W C

P S You had hardly reached Emberton when Mr Teedon came to charge us with his thanks to Miss Unwin for her goodness to him , the poor man looked so humble and grateful, that I forgave him all his past intrusions I be-

sech you, therefore, that you transmit his acknowledgments to his kind benefactress

CCCXXIII

PLEASURE IN HIS CONNEXION WITH THE UNWINS
—DR. JOHNSON'S DIARY—WHO AND THAT.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

August 27, 1785.

I WAS low in spirits yesterday, when your parcel came and raised them. Every proof of attention and regard to a man who lives in a vinegar bottle is welcome from his friends on the outside of it, accordingly your books were welcome, (you must not forget by the way that I want the original, of which you have sent me the translation only,) and the ruffles from Miss Shuttleworth most welcome. I am covetous, if ever man was, of living in the remembrance of absentees whom I highly value and esteem, and consequently felt myself much gratified by her very obliging present. I have had more comfort, far more comfort, in the connexions that I have formed within the last twenty years, than in the more numerous ones that I had before.

Memorandum.—The latter are almost all Unwins or Unwinisms

You are entitled to my thanks also for the facetious engravings of John Gilpin. A serious poem is like a swan, it flies heavily, and never far, but a jest has the wings of a swallow, that never tire, and that carry it into every nook and corner. I am perfectly a stranger however to the reception that my volume meets with, and I believe in respect of my *nonchalance* upon that subject, if authors would but copy so fair an example, am a most exemplary character. I must tell you nevertheless, that although the laurels that I gain at Olney will never minister much to my pride, I have acquired some. The Rev Mr. Scott is my admirer, and thinks my second volume superior to my first. It ought to be so. If we do not improve by practice, then nothing can mend us, and a man has no more cause to be mortified at being told that he has excelled himself, than the elephant had, whose praise it was, that he was the

greatest elephant in the world, himself excepted. This moment it occurs to me, that we have received from you a basket of very fine fish, unacknowledged hitherto, the receipt of which I hereby then thankfully acknowledge.

If it be fair to judge of a book by an extract, I do not wonder that you were so little edified by Johnson's Journal. It is even more ridiculous than was poor ——'s of flatulent memory. The portion of it given to us in this day's paper contains not one sentiment worth one farthing; except the last, in which he resolves to bind himself with no more unbidden obligations. Poor man! one would think, that to pray for his dead wife, and to pinch himself with church fasts, had been almost the whole of his religion. I am sorry that he, who was so manly an advocate for the cause of virtue in all other places, was so childishly employed, and so superstitiously too, in his closet. Had he studied his Bible more, to which by his own confession he was in great part a stranger, he had known better what use to make of his retired hours, and had trifled less. His lucubrations of this sort have rather the appearance of religious dotage, than of any vigorous exertions towards God. It will be well if the publication prove not hurtful in its effects, by exposing the best cause, already too much despised, to ridicule still more profane. On the other side of the same paper I find a long string of aphorisms, and maxims, and rules, for the conduct of life, which, though they appear not with his name, are so much in his manner with the above-mentioned, that I suspect them for his. I have not read them all, but several of them I read that were trivial enough. For the sake of one, however, I forgive him the rest, he advises never to banish hope entirely, because it is the cordial of life, although it be the greatest flatterer in the world. Such a measure of hope as may not endanger my peace by disappointment I would wish to cherish upon every subject in which I am interested. But there lies the difficulty,—mine at least, whose sanguine temper does not incline me to, nor even permit me, moderation in any thing. A cure, however, and the only one, for all the irregularities both of hope and fear, is found in submission to the will of God. Happy they that have it!

This last sentence puts me in mind of your reference to Blair in a former letter, whom you there permitted to be your arbiter to adjust the respective claims of *who* and *that*. I do not rashly differ from so great a grammarian, nor do I at any rate differ from him altogether,—upon solemn occasions, as in prayer or preaching for instance, I would be strictly correct, and upon stately ones,—for instance were I writing an epic poem, I would be so likewise, but not upon familiar occasions. God *who* heareth prayer, is right. Hector *who* saw Patroclus, is right. And the man *that* diesses me every day, is in my mind right also,—because the contrary would give an air of stiffness and pedantry to an expression, that in respect of the matter of it cannot be too negligently made up.

Adieu, my dear William! I have scribbled with all my might, which, breakfast-time excepted, has been my employment ever since I rose, and it is now past one

Yours, W C

CCCXXIV

**RECOLLECTION OF SOUTHAMPTON—DISLIKE OF
CONFINEMENT—SUNDAY SCHOOL—BLACKGUARDISM
OF THE CHILDREN AT OLNEY.**

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Sept 24, 1785

I AM sorry that an excursion, which you would otherwise have found so agreeable, was attended with so great a drawback upon its pleasures as Miss Cunningham's illness must needs have been. Had she been able to bathe in the sea, it might have been of service to her, but I knew her weakness and delicacy of habit to be such as did not encourage any very sanguine hopes that the regimen would suit her. I remember Southampton well, having spent much time there, but though I was young, and had no objections on the score of conscience either to dancing or cards, I never was in the assembly-room in my life. I never was fond of company, and especially disliked it in the country. A walk to Netley Abbey, or to Freemantle, or to Redbridge, or a book by the fire-side, had always more charms for

me than any other amusement that the place afforded I was also a sailor, and being of Sir Thomas Hesketh's party, who was himself born one, was often pressed into the service. But though I gave myself an air, and wore trowsers, I had no genuine right to that honour, disliking much to be occupied in great waters, unless in the finest weather. How they contrive to elude the wearisomeness that attends a sea life, who take long voyages, you know better than I, but for my own part, I seldom have sailed so far as from Hampton river to Portsmouth, without feeling the confinement irksome, and sometimes to a degree that was almost insupportable. There is a certain perverseness, of which I believe all men have a share, but of which no man has a larger share, than I,—I mean that temper, or humour, or whatever it is to be called, that indisposes us to a situation, though not unpleasant in itself, merely because we cannot get out of it. I could not endure the room in which I now write, were I conscious that the door were locked. In less than five minutes I should feel myself a prisoner, though I can spend hours in it, under an assurance that I may leave it when I please, without experiencing any tedium at all. It was for this reason, I suppose, that the yacht was always disagreeable to me. Could I have stepped out of it into a corn-field or a garden, I should have liked it well enough; but being surrounded with water, I was as much confined in it as if I had been surrounded by fire, and did not find that it made me any adequate compensation for such an abridgement of my liberty. I make little doubt but Noah was glad when he was enlarged from the ark, and we are sure that Jonah was, when he came out of the fish, and so was I to escape from the good sloop the Harriet.

In my last, I wrote you word that Mr Perry was given over by his friends, and pronounced a dead man by his physician. Just when I had reached the end of the foregoing paragraph, he came in. His errand hither was to bring two letters, which I enclose; one is to yourself, in which he will give you, I doubt not, such an account both of his body and mind, as will make all that I might say upon those subjects superfluous. The only consequences

of his illness seem to be, that he looks a little pale, and that though always a most excellent man, he is still more angelic than he was. Illness sanctified is better than health. But I know a man who has been a sufferer by a worse illness than his, almost these fourteen years, and who at present is only the worse for it.

Mr Scott called upon us yesterday he is much inclined to set up a Sunday school, if he can raise a fund for the purpose. Mr Jones has had one some time at Clifton, and Mr Unwin writes me word that he has been thinking of nothing else day and night, for a fortnight. It is a wholesome measure, that seems to bid fair to be pretty generally adopted, and for the good effects that it promises, deserves well to be so. I know not, indeed, while the spread of the go-s-p-e-l continues so limited as it is, how a reformation of manners, in the lower class of mankind, can be brought to pass, or by what other means the utter abolition of all principle among them, moral as well as religious, can possibly be prevented. Heathenish parents can only bring up heathenish children: an assertion no where oftener or more clearly illustrated than at Olney, where children, seven years of age, infest the streets every evening with curses and with songs, to which it would be unseemly to give their proper epithet. Such urchins as these could not be so diabolically accomplished, unless by the connivance of their parents. It is well, indeed, if in some instances their parents be not themselves their instructors. Judging by their proficiency, one can hardly suppose any other. It is, therefore, doubtless an act of the greatest charity to snatch them out of such hands, before the inveteracy of the evil shall have made it desperate. Mr Teedon, I should imagine, will be employed as a teacher, should this expedient be carried into effect. I know not, at least, that we have any other person among us so well qualified for the service. He is indisputably a Christian man, and miserably poor, whose revenues need improvement, as much as any children in the world can possibly need instruction.

I understand that Mr Jones is in London, it is possible that you may have seen him, and if you have, are better acquainted with his present intentions respecting Lord

Peterborough than myself. We saw him, not long since, when he talked of resigning his office immediately, but I hear that he was afterwards otherwise advised, and repented of his purpose. I think it great pity that he did. A thing that a man had better never have touched cannot too soon be relinquished. While his principal kept himself at a distance, his connexion with him was less offensive, but now to all who interest themselves in his conduct as a minister of the gospel, it is an offence indeed. He seems aware of it, and we hope, therefore, will soon abandon it.

Mrs. Unwin hopes that a hare, which she sent before Mrs. Newton went her journey, arrived safe. By this week-coach she also sent there fowls and a ham, with cabbages, of whose safe arrival she will likewise be glad to hear. She has long been troubled with a pain in her side, which we take to be of the spasmodic kind, but is otherwise well. She joins with me in love to yourself and Mrs. Newton, and to the young ladies, neither do we forget Sally Johnson.

Believe me, your dear friend,

With true affection, yours, W. C.

Hannah desires me to give her duty to Miss Cunningham and to Miss Catlett.

CCCXXV

REASONS FOR PUBLISHING HIS EPISTLES TO HIM.

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR SIR,

Oct 11, 1785

You began your letter with an apology for long silence, and it is now incumbent upon me to do the same, and the rather, as your kind invitation to Wargrave entitled you to a speedier answer. The truth is, that I am become, it not a man of business, yet a busy man, and have been engaged almost this twelvemonth in a work that will allow of no long interruption. On this account it was impossible for me to accept your obliging summons, and having only to tell you that I could not, it appeared to me as a matter of no great moment, whether you received that intelligence soon or late.

You do me justice, when you ascribe my printed epistle to

you, to my friendship for you, though, in fact, it was equally owing to the opinion that I have of yours for me. Having, in one part or other of my two volumes, distinguished by name the majority of those few for whom I entertain a friendship, it seemed to me that it would be unjustifiable negligence to omit yourself, and if I took that step without communicating to you my intention, it was only to gratify myself the more, with the hope of surprising you agreeably. Poets are dangerous persons to be acquainted with, especially if a man have that in his character that promises to shine in verse. To that very circumstance it is owing, that you are now figuring away in mine. I or, notwithstanding what you say on the subject of honesty and friendship, that they are not splendid enough for public celebration, I must still think of them as I did before,—that there are no qualities of the mind and heart that can describe it better. I can, at least for my own part, look round about upon the generality, and, while I see them deficient in those grand requisites of a respectable character, am not able to discover that they possess any other, of value enough to atone for the want of them.

I beg that you will present my respects to Mrs. Hill, and believe me Ever affectionately yours, WM. COWPER

CCCXVI

ON HER RETURN TO ENGLAND

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DARCHES,

Oct 12, 1785

It is no new thing with you to give pleasure. But I will venture to say that you do not often give more than you gave me this morning. When I came down to breakfast, and found upon the table a letter franked by my uncle, and when opening that frank I found that it contained a letter from you, I said within myself—'This is just as it should be. We are all grown young again, and the days that I thought I should see no more, are actually returned.' You perceive therefore that you judged well when you conjectured that a line from you would not be disagreeable to me.

It could not be otherwise than as in fact it proved, a most agreeable surprise, for I can truly boast of an affection for you, that neither years, nor interrupted intercourse, have at all abated. I need only recollect how much I valued you once, and with how much cause, immediately to feel a revival of the same value if that can be said to revive, which at the most has only been dormant for want of employment. But I slander it when I say that it has slept. A thousand times have I recollected a thousand scenes, in which our two selves have formed the whole of the drama, with the greatest pleasure, at times too, when I had no reason to suppose that I should ever hear from you again. I have laughed with you at the Arabian Nights Entertainments, which afforded us, as you well know, a fund of merriment that deserves never to be forgot. I have walked with you to Netley Abbey, and have scrambled with you over hedges in every direction, and many other feats we have performed together, upon the field of my remembrance, and all within these few years. Should I say within this twelve month, I should not transgress the truth. The hours that I have spent with you were among the pleasantest of my former days, and are therefore chronicled in my mind so deeply as to feel no erasure. Neither do I forget my poor friend Sir Thomas. I should remember him indeed, at any rate, on account of his personal kindness to myself, but the last testimony that he gave of his regard for you, endears him to me still more. With his uncommon understanding (for with many peculiarities he had more sense than any of his acquaintance,) and with his generous sensibilities, it was hardly possible that he should not distinguish you as he has done. As it was the last, so it was the best proof that he could give, of a judgment that never deceived him, when he would allow himself leisure to consult it.

You say that you have often heard of me, that puzzles me. I can not imagine from what quarter, but it is no matter. I must tell you however, my cousin, that your information has been a little defective. That I am happy in my situation is true, I live, and have lived these twenty years, with Mrs Unwin, to whose affectionate care of me, during the far greater part of that time, it is under Prov

dence owing that I live at all. But I do not account myself happy in having been for thirteen of those years in a state of mind, that has made all that care and attention necessary; an attention and a care that have injured her health, and which, had she not been uncommonly supported, must have brought her to the grave. But I will pass to another subject, it would be cruel to particularize only to give pain, neither would I by any means give a sable hue to the first letter of a correspondence so unexpectedly renewed.

I am delighted with what you tell me of my uncle's good health. To enjoy any measure of cheerfulness at so late a day is much. But to have that late day enlivened with the vivacity of youth, is much more, and in these postdiluvian times a rarity indeed. Happy for the most part are parents who have daughters. Daughters are not apt to outlive their natural affections, which a son has generally survived even before his boyish years are expired. I rejoice particularly in my uncle's felicity, who has three female descendants from his little person, who leave him nothing to wish for upon that head.

My dear cousin, dejection of spirits, which (I suppose) may have prevented many a man from becoming an author, made me one. I find constant employment necessary, and therefore take care to be constantly employed. Manual occupations do not engage the mind sufficiently, as I know by experience, having tried many. But composition, especially of verse, absorbs it wholly. I write therefore generally three hours in a morning, and in an evening I transcribe. I read also, but less than I write, for I must have bodily exercise, and therefore never pass a day without it.

You ask me where I have been this summer. I answer, at Olney. Should you ask me where I spent the last seventeen summers, I should still answer at Olney. Ay, and the winters also; I have seldom left it, and except when I attended my brother in his last illness, never I believe a fortnight together.

Adieu, my beloved cousin, I shall not always be thus nimble in reply, but shall always have great pleasure in answering you when I can.

Yours, my friend and cousin,

W. C.

CCCXXVII

REPLY TO AN OFFER OF PECUNIARY
ASSISTANCE

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, Nov. 9, 1785.

Whose last most affectionate letter has run in my head ever since I received it, and which I now sit down to answer two days sooner than the post will serve me, I thank you for it, and with a warmth for which I am sure you will give me credit though I do not spend many words in describing it. I do not seek *new* friends, not being altogether sure that I should find them, but have unspeakable pleasure in being still beloved by an old one. I hope that now our correspondence has suffered its last interruption, and that we shall go down to gether to the grave, chatting and chirping as merrily as such a scene of things as this will permit.

I am happy that my poems have pleased you. My volume has afforded me no such pleasure at any time, either while I was writing it, or since its publication, as I have derived from yours and my uncle's opinion of it. I make certain allowances for partiality, and for that peculiar quickness of taste, with which you both relish what you like, and after all drawbacks upon those accounts duly made, find myself rich in the measure of your approbation that still remains. But above all, I honour John Gilpin, since it was he who first encouraged you to write. I made him on purpose to laugh at, and he served his purpose well, but I am now in debt to him for a more valuable acquisition than all the laughter in the world amounts to, the recovery of my intercourse with you, which is to me inestimable. My benevolent and generous cousin, when I was once asked if I wanted any thing, and given delicately to understand that the inquirer was ready, to supply all my occasions, I thankfully and civilly, but positively, declined the favour. I neither suffer, nor have suffered, any such inconveniences as I had not much rather endure than come under obligations of that sort to a person comparatively with yourself a stranger to me. But to you

I answer otherwise. I know you thoroughly, and the liberality of your disposition, and have that consummate confidence in the sincerity of your wish to serve me, that delivers me from all awkward constraint, and from all fear of trespassing by acceptance. To you, therefore, I reply, yes. Whensoever, and whatsoever, and in what manner soever you please, and add moreover, that my affection for the giver is such as will increase to me tenfold the satisfaction that I shall have in receiving. It is necessary, however, that I should let you a little into the state of my finances, that you may not suppose them more narrowly circumscribed than they are. Since Mrs. Unwin and I have lived at Olney, we have had but one purse, although during the whole of that time, till lately, her income was nearly double mine. Her revenues indeed are now in some measure reduced, and do not much exceed my own, the worst consequence of this is, that we are forced to deny ourselves some things which hitherto we have been better able to afford, but they are such things as neither life, nor the well being of life, depend upon. My own income has been better than it is, but when it was best, it would not have enabled me to live as my connections demanded that I should, had it not been combined with a better than itself, at least at this end of the kingdom. On this I had full proof during three months that I spent in lodgings at Huntingdon, in which time by the help of good arrangement, and a clear notion of economical matters, I contrived to spend the income of a twelve month. Now my beloved cousin, you are in possession of the whole case as it stands. Strain no points to your own inconvenience or hurt, for there is no need of it, but indulge yourself in communicating (no matter what) that you can spare without missing it, since by so doing you will be sure to add to the comforts of my life one of the sweetest that I can enjoy—the token and proof of your affection.

In the affair of my next publication, toward which you also offer me so kindly your assistance, there will be no need that you should help me in the manner that you propose. It will be a large work consisting, I should imagine, of six volumes at least. The twelfth of this month I shall have spent a year upon it, and it will cost me more than another

I do not love the booksellers well enough to make them a present of such a labour, but intend to publish by subscription. Your vote and interest, my dear cousin, upon the occasion, if you please, but nothing more! I will trouble you with some papers or proposals, when the time shall come, and am sure that you will circulate as many for me as you can. Now, my dear, I am going to tell you a secret. It is a great secret, that you must not whisper even to your cat. No creature is at this moment apprised of it but Mrs Unwin and her son. I am making a new translation of Homer, and am on the point of finishing the twenty-first book of the *Iliad*. The reasons upon which I undertake this Herculean labour, and by which I justify an enterprise in which I seem so effectually anticipated by Pope, although in fact he has not anticipated me at all, I may possibly give you, if you wish for them, when I can find nothing more interesting to say. A period which I do not conceive to be very near! I have not answered many things in your letter, nor can I do it at present for want of room. I cannot believe but that I should know you, notwithstanding all that time may have done: there is not a feature of your face, could I meet it upon the road, by itself, that I should not instantly recollect. I should say, that is my cousin's nose, or those are her lips and her chin, and no woman upon earth can claim them but herself. As for me, I am a very smart youth of my years, I am not indelicately grown gray so much as I am grown bald. No matter: there was more hair in the world than ever had the honour to be long to me. Accordingly having found just enough to cover a little at my ears, and to intermix with a little of my own that still hangs behind, I appear, if you see me in an afternoon, to have a very decent head-dress, not easily distinguished from my natural growth, which being worn with small bag, and a black ribband about my neck, continues to me the charms of my youth, even on the verge of old age. Away with the fear of writing too often!

W C

P S — That the view I give you of myself may be complete, I add the two following items — That I am in debt to nobody, and that I grow fat

CCCXXIX.

DEATH-BED MEMOIRS—REASONS FOR TRANSLATING HOMER—RENEWAL OF HIS INTERCOURSE WITH LADY HESKETH—HOPE OF BETTER DAYS.

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 3, 1785

I AM glad to hear that there is such a demand for your last Narrative. If I may judge of their general utility by the effect that they have heretofore had upon me, there are few things more edifying than death bed memoirs. They interest every reader because they speak of a period at which all must arrive, and afford a solid ground of encouragement to survivors to expect the same, or similar support and comfort, when it shall be their turn to die.

I also am employed in writing narrative, but not so useful Employment, however, and with the pen, is, through habit, become essential to my well being, and to produce always original poems, especially of considerable length, is not so easy. For some weeks after I had finished the Iliad, and sent away the last sheet corrected, I was through necessity idle, and suffered not a little in my spirits for being so. One day, being in such distress of mind as was hardly supportable, I took up the Iliad, and merely to divert attention and with no more pre-conception of what I was then entering upon, than I have at this moment of what I shall be doing this day twenty years hence, translated the twelve first lines of it. The same necessity pressing me again, I had recourse to the same expedient, and translated more. Every day bringing its occasion for employment with it, every day consequently added something to the work till at last I began to reflect thus — The Iliad and Odyssey together consists of about forty thousand verses. To translate these forty thousand verses will furnish me with occupation for a considerable time. I have already made some progress, and I find it a most agreeable amusement. Homer, in point of purity, is a most blameless writer and, though he was not an enlightened man, his interspersed many great and valuable truths throughout both his poems

In short, he is in all respects a most venerable old gentleman, by an acquaintance with whom no man can disgrace himself. The literati are all agreed to a man, that, although Pope has given us two pretty poems under Homer's titles, there is not to be found in them the least portion of Homer's spirit, not the least resemblance of his manner. I will try, therefore, whether I cannot copy him somewhat more happily myself. I have at least the advantage of Pope's faults and failings, which, like so many buoys upon a dangerous coast, will serve me to steer by, and will make my chance for success more probable. These and many other considerations, but especially a mind that abhorred a vacuum as its chief bane, impelled me so effectually to the work, that ere long, I mean to publish proposals for a subscription to it, having advanced so far as to be warranted in doing so. I have connexions, and no few such, by means of which I have the utmost reason to expect that a brisk circulation may be procured, and if it should prove a profitable enterprise, the profit will not accrue to a man who may be said not to want it. It is a business such as it will not, indeed, lie much in your way to promote, but, among your numerous connexions, it is possible that you may know some who would sufficiently interest themselves in such a work to be not unwilling to subscribe to it. I do not mean—far be it from me—to put you upon making hazardous applications, where you might possibly incur a refusal, that would give you though but a moment's pain. You know best your own opportunities and powers in such a cause. If you can do but little, I shall esteem it much, and if you can do nothing, I am sure that it will not be for want of a will.

I have lately had three visits from my old school-fellow Mr. Bigot, a brother of Lord Bigot, and of Mr. Chester of Chicheley. At his first visit he brought his wife with him, a most amiable woman, to see Mrs. Unwin. I told him my purpose, and my progress. He received the news with great pleasure, immediately subscribed a draft of twenty pounds, and promised me his whole heart, and his whole interest, which lies principally among people of the first fashion.

My correspondence has lately also been renewed with my dear cousin Lady Hesketh, whom I ever loved as a sister, (for we were in a manner brought up together,) and who writes to me as affectionately as if she were so. She also enters into my views and interests upon this occasion with a warmth that gives me great encouragement. The circle of *her* acquaintance is likewise very extensive, and I have no doubt that she will exert her influence to its utmost possibilities among them. I have other strings to my bow, (perhaps, as a translator of Homer, I should say, to my lyre,) which I cannot here enumerate, but, upon the whole, my prospect seems promising enough. I have not yet consulted Johnson upon the occasion, but intend to do it soon.

My spirits are somewhat better than they were. In the course of the last month, I have perceived a very sensible amendment. The hope of better days seems again to dawn upon me, and I have now and then an intimation, though slight and transient, that God has not abandoned me for ever.

We have paid Nat. Gee his interest, and I enclose his acknowledgement. His list was so effectually mislaid that we have never found it. Mrs. Unwin, who sends her love, begs that you will pay out of that sum for the newspapers, and remit, if you can think of it, the few shillings that will remain, by the first that shall call upon you in his way to Olney. She is sorry that she forgot the greens.

This last paragraph must be considered as in a parenthesis, for I am going back to the subject of the preceding, viz. myself. Having been for some years troubled with an inconvenient stomach, and lately, with a stomach that will digest nothing without help, and we having reached the bottom of our own medical skill, into which we have dived to little or no purpose, I have at length consented to consult Dr. Kerr, and expect to see him in a day or two. Engaged as I am, and am likely to be, so long as I am capable of it, in writing for the press, I cannot well afford to enter upon a malady that is such an enemy to all mental operations.

The morning is beautiful, and tempts me forth into the garden. It is all the walk that I can have at this season,

but not all the exercise. I ring a peal every day upon the dumbbells

I am, my dear friend, most truly,
Yours and Mrs. Newton's, W C

CCCXXX.

**WRITING BENEFICIAL TO HIM—HIS DAILY TASK
IN TRANSLATING—REMARKS ON POPE'S HOMER**

TO LADY HESKETH.

DEAREST COUSIN,

Thursday, Dec 15, 1795

My desk is always pleasant, but never so pleasant as when I am writing to you. If I am not obliged to you for the thing itself, at least I am for your having decided the matter against me, and resolving that it should come in spite of all my objections. Before it arrived, Mrs. Unwin had spied out for it a place that exactly suits it. A certain fly-table in the corner of the room, which I had over looked, affords it a convenient stand when it is not wanted, and it is easily transferred to a larger when it is. If I must not know to whom I am principally indebted for it, at least let me entreat you to make my acknowledgements of gratitude and love. As to my frequent use of it, I will tell you how that matter stands. When I was writing my first volume, and was but just beginning to emerge from a state of melancholy that had continued some years (from which, by the way, I do not account myself even now delivered,) Mrs. Unwin insisted on my relinquishing the pen, apprehending consequences injurious to my health. When ladies insist, you know, there is an end of the business, obedience on our part becomes necessary. I accordingly obeyed, but having lost my fiddle, I became pensive and unhappy, she therefore restored it to me, convinced of its utility, and from that day to this I have never ceased to scrape. Observe, however, my dear, that I scrape not always. My task that I assign myself is to translate forty lines a day, if they pass off easily I sometimes make them fifty, but never abate any part of the allotted number. Perhaps I am occupied an hour and a half, perhaps

three hours, but generally between two and three. This, you see, is labour that can hurt no man, and what I have translated in the morning, in the evening I transcribe.

Imagine not that I am so inhuman as to send you into the field with no coadjutor but Mr Bagot. He is indeed one of my great dependencies, but I have others, and not inconsiderable ones besides. Mr Unwin is of course hearty in my cause, and he has several important connexions. I have, by his means originally, an acquaintance, though by letters only, with Mr Smith, member for Nottingham. My whole intercourse with my bookseller has hitherto been carried on through the medium of parliamentary privilege. He is pleased to speak very handsomely of my books, and, I doubt not, will assist my subscription with ardour. John Thornton the great, who together with his three sons, all three in parliament, his, I suppose, a larger sweep in the city than any man will, I have reason to hope, be equally zealous in my favour. Mr Newton, who has a large influence in that quarter also, will, I know, serve me like a brother. I have also exchanged some letters with Mr Bacon, the statuary, whose connexions must needs be extensive, and who, if I may judge from the sentiments that he expresses towards me, will not be backward in my service. Neither have I any doubt but that I can engage Lord Dartmouth. These, my dearest cousin, except the last, (and I mention it for your greater comfort,) are all, to a man, Pittites. Mr Smith, in particular, is one of the minister's most intimate friends, and was with him when the turnpike man had like to have spoiled him for a premier for ever. All this I have said by way of clapping you on the back, not wondering that your poor heart ached at the idea of being almost a solitary Lady Lrrant on the occasion.

With respect to the enterprise itself, there are certain points of delicacy that will not suffer me to make a public justification of it. It would ill become me avowedly to point out the faults of Pope in a preface, and would be as impolitic as indecent. But to you, my dear, I can utter my mind freely. Let me premise, however, that you answered the gentleman's inquiry, whether in blank verse

or not, to a marvel. It is even so, and let some critics say what they will, I aver it, and will for ever aver it, that to give a just representation of Homer in rhyme, is a natural impossibility. Nox for Pope himself. I will allow his whole merit. He has written a great deal of very musical and sweet verse in his translation of Homer, but his verse is not universally such, on the contrary, it is often lame, feeble, and flat. He has, besides, occasionally a felicity of expression peculiar to himself, but it is a felicity purely modern, and has nothing to do with Homer. Except the Bible, there never was in the world a book so remarkable for that species of the sublime that owes its very existence to simplicity, as the works of Homer. He is always nervous, plain, natural. I refer you to your own knowledge of his copyist for a decision upon Pope's merits in these particulars. The garden in all the gaiety of June is less flowery than his Translation. Metaphors of which Homer never dreamt, which he did not seek, and which probably he would have disdained if he had found, follow each other in quick succession like the sliding pictures in a show box. Homer is, on occasions that call for such a style, the easiest and most familiar of all writers, a circumstance that escaped Pope entirely, who takes most religious care that he shall everywhere strut in buckram. The speeches of his heroes are often animated to a degree that Pope no doubt accounted unmannerly and rude, for he has reduced numbers of them that are of that character to the perfect standard of French good-breeding. Shakspeare himself did not excel Homer in discrimination of character, neither is he more attentive to exact consistence and preservation of it throughout. In Pope, to whatever cause it was owing, whether he did not see it, or seeing it, accounted it an affair of no moment, this great beauty is almost absolutely annihilated. In short, my dear, there is hardly any thing in the world so unlike another, as Pope's version of Homer to the original. Give me a great corking pin that I may stick your faith upon my sleeve. There—it is done. Now assure yourself, upon the credit of a man who made Homer much his study in his youth, and who is

perhaps better acquainted with Pope's translation of him than almost any man, having twenty-five years ago compared them with each other line by line throughout, upon the credit of a man, too, who would not for the world deceive you in the smallest matter, that Pope never entered into the spirit of Homer, that he never translated him, I had almost said, did not understand him—many passages it is literally true that he did not. Why, when he first entered on his task, did he, (as he did, by his own confession,) for ever dream that he was wandering in unknown ways, that he was lost upon heaths and forests, and awoke in terror? I will tell you, my dear, his dreams were emblems of his waking experience, and I am mistaken, if I could not go near to prove that at his first setting out, he knew very little of Greek, and was never in adipt in it, to the last. Therefore, my beloved cousin, once more take heart. I have a fair opportunity to acquire honour, and if when I have finished the *Iliad*, I do not upon cool consideration think that I have secured it, I will burn the copy.

A hundred things must go unanswered, but not the oysters unacknowledged, which are remarkably fine. Again I leave space for Kerr, not having seen him yet. I cannot go to him now, lest we *should meet in the midway between*

Saturday.

I must now huddle up twenty matters in a corner. No Kerr yet—a report prevails in our town that he is very ill, and I am very sorry if he is. I were no better than a beast could I forget to thank you for an order of oysters through the season. I love you for all your kindnesses, and for this among the rest. I wrote lately to Johnson on the subject of Homer. He is a knowing man in his trade, and understands booksellers' traps as well as any man. He wishes me not to publish by subscription, but to put my copy into his hands. He thinks he can make me such proposals as I shall like. I shall answer him to-day, and not depart from my purpose. But I consider his advice as a favourable omen. The last post brought me a very obliging letter from the abovesaid Mr. Smith. I shall answer it to-day, and shall make my intended application for his interest in behalf of my subscription. I always take care to have suffi-

cient exercise every day When the weather forbids walking, I ring a thousand bob-majors upon the dumb-bells. You would be delighted to see the performance Again, I say that I love you, and I do so in particular for the interest that you took in the success of the passages that you say were read in the evening party that you mention I know the friendly warmth of your heart, and how valuable a thing it is to have a share in it The hare was caught by a shepherd's dog, that had not the fear of the law before his eyes, was transferred by the shepherd to the clerk of the parish, and by him presented to us Mrs Unwin is ever deeply sensible of your kind remembrances of her Her son is sometimes in Town, and if you permit him, will, I doubt not, rejoice to give a morning rap at your door, upon the first intimation of such permission from me, whenever opportunity shall offer

Now farewell, my dearest cousin, and deservedly my most beloved friend, farewell

With true affection yours, WM COWPER

CCCCXXI

SUBSCRIPTION—THE DESK.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 24, 1785

You would have found a letter from me at Mr Smith's according to your assignation, had not the post, settling out two hours sooner than the usual time, prevented me The Odyssey that you sent, has but one fault, at least but one that I have discovered, which is, that I cannot read it The very attempt, if persevered in, would soon make me as blind as Homer was himself I am now in the first book of the Iliad, shall be obliged to you therefore for a more legible one by the first opportunity

I wrote to Johnson lately, desiring him to give me advice and information on the subject of proposals for a subscription, and he desired me in his answer not to use that mode of publication, but to treat with him, adding,

that he could make me such offers, as (he believed) I should approve. I have replied to his letter, but abide by my first purpose.

Having occasion to write to Mr Smith, concerning his princely benevolence, extended this year also to the poor of Olney, I put in a good word for my poor self likewise, and have received a very obliging and encouraging answer. He promises me six names in particular, that (he says) will do me no discredit, and expresses a wish to be served with papers as soon as they shall be printed.

I meet with encouragement from all quarters, such as I find need of indeed in an enterprise of such length and moment, but such as at the same time I find effectual. Homer is not a poet to be translated under the disadvantage of doubts and dejection.

Let me sing the praises of the desk which my dear cousin has sent me. In general, it is as elegant as possible. In particular, it is of cedar, beautifully lacquered. When put together, it assumes the form of a handsome small chest, contains all sorts of accommodations, is furnished with cut glass for ink and sand, and is hinged, handled, and mounted with silver. It is inlaid with ivory, and serves the purpose of reading desk. It came stored with stationery of all sorts, and this splendid sheet is a part of it. The snuff box, a present to your mother, is also very handsome. French paper, with a gold hinge, and bordered with an inlay of *concatenated gold*, as the Gods call it, but as men, with a gold chain.

Your affectionate

W. C.

CCCXXII

INFORMING HIM OF HIS INTENDED TRANSLATION

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Dec 24, 1785

TILL I had made such a progress in my present undertaking, as to put it out of all doubt that, if I lived, I should

proceed in, and finish it, I kept the matter to myself. It would have done me little honour to have told my friends that I had an arduous enterprise in hand, if afterwards I must have told them that I had dropped it. Knowing it to have been universally the opinion of the literati, ever since they have allowed themselves to consider the matter coolly, that a translation, properly so called, of Homer, is, notwithstanding what Pope has done, a desideratum in the English language, it struck me, that an attempt to supply the deficiency would be an honourable one; and having made myself, in former years, somewhat critically a master of the original, I was by this double consideration induced to make the attempt myself. I am now translating into blank verse the last book of the *Iliad*, and mean to publish by subscription

W. C.

CCCXXXIII.

**ENDEAVOURS TO SERVE HIMSELF WITH HIS
TRANSLATION—REFUSAL OF SAMPLE—MR.
SMITH'S BOUNTY TO THE POOR.**

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Dec 31, 1785

You have learned from my last that I am now conducting myself upon the plan that you recommended to me in the summer. But since I wrote it, I have made still farther advances in my negotiation with Johnson. The proposals are adjusted. The proof-sheet has been printed off, corrected, and returned. They will be sent abroad as soon as I can make up a complete list of the personages and persons to whom I would have them sent, which in a few days I hope to be able to accomplish. Johnson behaves very well, at least according to my conception of the matter, and seems sensible that I have dealt liberally with him. He wishes me to be a gainer by my labours, in his own words, "to put something handsome in my pocket," and recommends two large quartos for the whole. He would not (he says) by any means advise an extravagant price, and has fixed it at three guineas, the half, as usual, be paid at the

time of subscribing, the remainder on delivery Five hundred names (he adds) at this price will put above a thousand pounds into my purse, I am doing my best to obtain them I have written, I think, to all my quondam friends, except those that are dead, requiring the assistance I have gulped and swallowed, and I have written to the Chancellor, and I have written to Colman I now bring them both to a fair test They can both serve me most materially if so disposed Mr Newton is warm in my service, and can do not a little I have of course written to Mr Bagot, who, when he was here, with much earnestness and affection entreated me so to do, as soon as I should have settled the conditions If I could get Sir Richard Sutton's address, I would write to him also, though I have been but once in his company since I left Westminster, where he and I read the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* through together I enclose Lord Dartmouth's answer to my application, which I will get you to show to Lady Hesketh, because it will please her I shall be glad if you can make an opportunity to call on her, during your present stay in town You observe therefore that I am not wanting to myself, he that is so, has no just claim on the assistance of others, neither shall myself have any cause to complain of me in other respects I thank you for your friendly hints and precautions, and shall not fail to give them the guidance of my pen I respect the public, and respect myself, and had rather want bread than expose myself wantonly to the condemnation of either I hate the affectation so frequently found in authors, of negligence and slovenly slightness, and in the present case am sensible how especially necessary it is to shun them, when I undertake the vast and invidious labour of doing better than Pope has done before me I thank you for all that you have said and done in my cause, and beforehand for all that you shall say and do hereafter I am sure that there will be no deficiency on your part In particular I thank you for taking such jealous care of my honour and respectability, when the Mann you mention applied for samples of my translation When I deal in wine, cloth, or cheese, I will give samples, but of verse never. No consideration would have induced me to com-

ply with the gentleman's demand, unless he could have assured me that his wife had longed

I have frequently thought with pleasure of the summer that you have had in your heart, while you have been employed in softening the severity of winter in behalf of so many who must otherwise have been exposed to it I wish that you could make a general gaol—delivery, leaving only those behind who cannot elsewhere be so properly disposed of You never said a better thing in your life, than when you assured Mr Smith of the expediency of a gift of bedding to the poor of Olney. There is no one article of this world's comforts, with which, as Falstaff says, they are so heinously unprovided When a poor woman, and an honest one, whom we know well, carried home two pair of blankets, a pair for herself and husband, and a pair for her six children, as soon as the children saw them, they jumped out of their straw, caught them in their arms, kissed them, blessed them, and danced for joy. An old woman, a very old one, the first night that she found herself so comfortably covered, could not sleep a wink, being kept awake by the contrary emotions, of transport on the one hand, and the fear of not being thankful enough on the other

It just occurs to me, to say, that this manuscript of mine will be ready for the press, as I hope, by the end of February I shall have finished the *Iliad* in about ten days, and shall proceed immediately to the revisal of the whole You must, if possible, come down to Olney, if it be only that you may take the charge of its safe delivery to Johnson For if by any accident it should be lost, I am undone,—the first copy being but a lean counterpart of the second

Your mother joins with me in love and good wishes of every kind, to you, and all yours. Adieu, W. C.

1786.

CCCXXXIV.

**PLEASED THAT SHE IS PLEASED WITH MR. UNWIN
—ANIMADVERSION ON THE TASK AS BEING
UNEQUAL WELL RECEIVED.**

TO LADY HESKETH.

Jan. 10 1786

It gave me great pleasure that you found my friend Unwin, what I was sure you would find him, a most agreeable man. I did not usher him in with the marrow-bones and cleavers of high-sounding panegyric, both because I was certain that whatsoever merit he had, your discernment would mark it, and because it is possible to do a man material injury by making his praise his harbinger. It is easy to raise expectation to such a pitch, that the reality, be it ever so excellent, must necessarily fall below it.

I hold myself much indebted to Mr ———, of whom I have the first information from yourself, both for his friendly disposition towards me, and for the manner in which he marks the defects in my volume. An author must be tender indeed to wince on being touched so gently. It is undoubtedly as he says, and as you and my uncle say. You cannot be all mistaken, neither is it at all probable that any of you should be so. I take it for granted therefore that there are inequalities in the composition, and I do assure you, my dear, most faithfully, that if it should reach a second edition, I will spare no pains to improve it. It may serve me for an agreeable amusement perhaps when Homer shall be gone and done with. The first edition of poems has generally been susceptible of improvement. Pope, I believe, never published one in his life that did not undergo variations, and his longest pieces, many I will not observe, that inequalities there must be always, and in every work of length. There are level parts of every subject, parts which we cannot with propriety attempt to elevate. They are by nature humble, and can only be made to assume an awkward and uncouth appearance by being mounted. But, again, I take it for granted that this remark does not apply to the matter of your objection. You were sufficiently aware of it, before, and have no need that

I should suggest it as an apology, could it have served that office, but would have made it for me yourself. In truth, my dear, had you known in what anguish of mind I wrote the whole of that poem, and under what perpetual interruptions from a cause that has since been removed, so that sometimes I had not an opportunity of writing more than three lines at a sitting, you would long since have wondered as much as I do myself, that it turned out any thing better than Grub Street.

My cousin, give yourself no trouble to find out any of the Magi to scrutinize my Homer. I can do without them and if I were not conscious that I have no need of their help, I would be the first to call for it. Assure yourself that I intend to be careful to the utmost line of all possible caution, both with respect to language and versification. I will not send a verse to the press, that shall not have undergone the strictest examination.

As subscription is surely on every account the most eligible mode of publication. When I shall have emptied the purses of my friends, and of their friends, into my own, I am still free to levy contributions upon the world at large, and I shall then have a fund to defray the expenses of a new edition. I have ordered Johnson to print the proposals immediately, and hope that they will kiss your hands before the week is expired.

I have had the kindest letter from Josephus that I ever had. He mentioned my purpose to one of the masters of Eton, who replied, that "such a work is much wanted."

Affectionately yours, W. C.

CCCCXXV

GLAD THAT HIS FRIEND HAS SEEN LADY HESKETH—WHY DOES THE ILIAD END WITH THE BURIAL OF HECTOR? MR. UNWIN'S CENSURERS.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Jan. 14, 1786,

I AM glad that you have seen Lady Hesketh. I knew that you would find her every thing that is amiable and elegant. Else, being my relation, I would never have shown her to

you. She also was delighted with her visitor, and expects the greatest pleasure in seeing you again, but is under some apprehensions that a tender regard for the drum of your ear may keep you from her. Never mind ! you have two drums ; and if she should crack both, I will buy you a trumpet.

General Cowper having much pressed me to accompany my proposals with a specimen, I have sent him one. It is taken from the twenty-fourth book of the *Iliad*, and is part of the interview between Priam and Achilles. Tell me, if it be possible, for any man to tell me,—why did Homer leave off at the burial of Hector ? Is it possible that he could be determined to it by a concert, so little worthy of him, as that, having made the number of his books completely the alphabetical number, he would not for the joke's sake proceed any farther ? Why did he not give us the death of Achilles, and the destruction of Troy ? Tell me also, if the critics, with Aristotle at their head, have not found that he left off exactly where he should, and that every epic poem, to all generations, is bound to conclude with the burial of Hector ? I do not in the least doubt it. I therefore, if I live to write a dozen epic poems, I will always take care to bury Hector, and to bring all matters at that point to an immediate conclusion.

I had a truly kind letter from Mr Smith, written immediately on his recovery from the fever. I am bound to honour James's powder, not only for the services it has often rendered to myself, but still more for having been the means of preserving a life ten times more valuable to society than mine is ever likely to be.

You say—"why should I trouble you with my troubles ?" I answer—"Why not ? What is a friend good for, if we may not lay one end of the sack upon his shoulders, while we ourselves carry the other ?"

• You see your duty to God, and your duty to your neighbour, and you practise both with your best ability. Yet a certain person accounts you blind. I would that all the world were so blinded even as you are ! But there are some in it, who, like the Chinese, say—"We have two eyes, and other nations have but one !" I am glad however that

in your one eye you have sight enough to discover that such censures are not worth minding

I thank you heartily for every step you take in the advancement of my present purpose.

Contrive to pay Lady H a long visit, for she has a thousand things to say. Yours, my dear William, W. C.

CCCXXXVI

**HOPES FROM HIS SUBSCRIPTION—LORD
DARTMOUTH.**

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

JAN 14, 1786.

YOU never suffered your sermons to interfere with our correspondence, much less ought I to permit my poetry to do so. Neither do I, for though I have many unanswered letters, at least several, and am at this time particularly intent upon the preparation of the *Iliad* for the press, these are not the reasons why I am at this time shorter than usual. I told you I believe, that I have been obliged to put my stomach under the care of a physician. A part of the discipline that he has enjoined me is an emetic every ten days or a fortnight. This happens to be the very day dedicated to that exercise, and the abominable drug not choosing to return the way it went, has kept me in a state of continual sickness, so that I am at present altogether unqualified to do what I have here undertaken.

My proposals are already printed. I ought rather to say, that they are ready for printing, having near ten days ago returned the correction of the proof. But a cousin of mine, and one who will, I dare say, be very active in my literary cause, (I mean General Cowper,) having earnestly recommended it to me to annex a specimen, I have accordingly sent him one, extracted from the latter part of the last book of the *Iliad*, and consisting of a hundred and seven lines. I chose to extract it from that part of the poem, because if the reader should happen to find himself content with it, he will naturally be encouraged by it to hope well of the part preceding. Every man who can do any thing in the translating way is pretty sure to set off with spirit; but in

works of such a length, there is always danger of flagging near the close

My subscription, I hope, will be more powerfully promoted than subscriptions generally are. I have a warm and affectionate friend in Lady Hesketh, and one equally disposed, and even still more able to serve me, in the General above-mentioned. The Bagot family all undertake my cause with ardour, and I have several others, of whose ability and good-will I could not doubt without doing them injustice. It will, however, be necessary to bestow much time on the revival of this work, for many reasons, and especially, because he who contends with Pope upon Homer's ground, can, of all writers, least afford to be negligent.

Mr. Scott brought me as much as he could remember of a kind message from Lord Dartmouth, but it was rather imperfectly delivered. Enough of it, however, came to hand to convince me that his Lordship takes a friendly interest in my success. When his Lordship and I sat side by side, in the sixth form at Westminster, we little thought that in process of time, one of us was ordained to give a new translation of Homer. Yet, at that very time, it seems, I was laying the foundation of this superstructure.

We were greatly pleased with your account of Mr W. May your new disciple's conduct ever do honour to his principles, and to the instructions of the spiritual counsellor whom he hath chosen. Mr. Unwin in his last letter takes notice of the change in him that you have spoken of. Your letter is at this moment in the flames, according to your desire.

Many thanks for oysters, and much love upon all accounts, to you and yours. Adieu, my friend, W. C.

CCCXXXVII.

**ON THE SPECIMEN OF HIS TRANSLATION—
BISHOP BAGOT.**

• TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

MY DEAR FRIEND,

JAN 15, 1786.

I HAVE just time to give you an hasty line to explain to you the delay that the publication of my proposals has

unexpectedly encountered, and at which I suppose that you have been somewhat surprised

I have a near relation in London and a warm friend in General Cowper ; he is also a person as able as willing to render me material service. I lately made him acquainted with my design of sending into the world a new Translation of Homer, and told him that my papers would soon attend him. He soon after desired that I would annex to them a specimen of the work. To this I at first objected, for reasons that need not be enumerated here, but at last acceded to his advice, and accordingly the day before yesterday I sent him a specimen. It consists of one hundred and seven lines, and is taken from the interview between Priam and Achilles in the last book. I chose to extract from the latter end of the poem, and as near to the close of it as possible, that I might encourage a hope in the readers of it, that if they found it in some degree worthy of their approbation they would find the former parts of the work not less so. For if a writer flags any where, it must be when he is near the end.

My subscribers will have an option given them in the proposals respecting the price. My predecessor in the same business was not quite so moderate. You may say perhaps, (at least if your kindness for me did not prevent it, you would be ready to say,) "It is well, —but do you place yourself on a level with Pope?" I answer, or rather *should* answer—"By no means,—not as a poet, but as a translator of Homer, if I did not expect and believe that I should even surpass him, why have I meddled with this matter at all? If I confess inferiority I reprobate my own undertaking."

When I can hear of the rest of the bishops, that they preach and live as your brother does, I will think more respectfully of them than I feel inclined to do at present. They may be learned, and I know that some of them are, but your brother, learned as he is, has other more powerful recommendations. Persuade him to publish his poetry, and I promise you that he shall find as warm and sincere an admirer in me as in any man that lives.

Yours, my dear friend, very affectionately, W. C.

CCCXXXVIII.

A LETTER FROM ANONYMOUS, PROMISING FIFTY POUNDS YEARLY—GOOD HOPES—ELLIOT'S MEDICINES—FRIENDLY EXERTIONS OF THE BAGOT FAMILY.

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAR,

Olney, Monday, Jan 23, 1786.

ANONYMOUS is come again ;—may God bless him, whosoever he be, 'as I doubt not that he will. A certain person said on a certain occasion, (and he never spoke a word that failed,) Whoso giveth you a cup of cold water in my name, shall by no means lose his reward. Therefore anonymous as he chooses to be upon earth, his name I trust, will hereafter be found written in heaven. But when great princes, or characters much superior to great princes, choose to be incog, it is a sin against decency and good manners to seem to know them. I therefore know nothing of anonymous, but that I love him heartily and with most abundant cause. Had I opportunity I would send you his letter, though yourself excepted, I would indulge none with a sight of it. To confide it to *your* hands will be no violation of the secrecy that he has enjoined himself, and consequently me. But I can give you a short summary of its purport—After an introduction of a religious cast, which does great honour to himself, and in which he makes a humble comparison between himself and me, by far too much to my advantage, he proceeds to tell me that being lately in company where my last work was mentioned, mention was also made of my intended publication. He informs me of the different sentiments of the company on that subject, and expresses his own in terms the most encouraging; but adds, that having left the company, and shut himself up in his chamber, an apprehension there seized him, lest, if perhaps the world should not enter into my views of the matter, and the work should come short of the success that I hope for, the mortification might prove too much for my health, yet thinks that even in that case I may comfort myself by adverting to similar instances of failure where the writer's genius would have insured suc-

cess, if any thing could have insured it, and alludes in particular to the fate and fortune of the *Paradise Lost*. In the last place he gives his attention to my circumstances, takes the kindest notice of their narrowness, and makes me a present of an annuity of fifty pounds a year, wishing that it were five hundred pounds. In a P. S. he tells me, a small parcel will set off by the Wellingborough coach on Tuesday next, which he hopes will arrive safe. I have given you the bones, but the benignity and affection which is the marrow of those bones, in so short an abridgement, I could not give you. Wonder with me, my beloved cousin, at the goodness of God, who, according to Dr. Watts's beautiful stanza.

—can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night,
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
To rivers of delight.

As I said once before, so say I again, my heart is as light as a bird on the subject of Homer. Neither without prayer, nor without confidence in the providential goodness of God, has that work been undertaken or continued. I am not so dim-sighted, sad as my spirit is at times, but that I can plainly discern his Providence going before me in the way. Unforeseen, unhopèd-for advantages have sprung at his bidding, and a prospect, at first cloudy indeed and discouraging enough, has been continually brightening ever since I announced my intentions. But suppose the worst — suppose that I should not succeed in any measure proportioned to my hopes, — how then? Why then, my dear, I will hold this language with myself. To write was necessary to me. I undertook an honourable task, and with upright intentions. It served me for more than two years as an amusement, and as such was of infinite service to my spirits. But God did not see it good for me that I should be very famous. If he did not, it is better for me that I am not. Fame is neither my meat nor my drink. I lived fifty years without it, and should I live fifty more and get to heaven at last, then I shall not want it. — So, my dear, you see that I am armed at all points. I do not mean that I should feel nothing, but that thus thinking I should feel supportably.

I knew that my last letter would give you pain, but there is no need that it should give you so much. He who hath preserved me hitherto, will still preserve me. All the dangers that I have escaped are so many pillars of remembrance to which I shall hereafter look back with comfort, and be able, as I well hope, to inscribe on every one of them a grateful memorial of God's singular protection of me. Mine has been a life of wonders for many years, and a life of wonders I in my heart believe it will be to the end. Wonders I have seen in the great deeps, and wonders I shall see in the paths of mercy also. Thus, my dear, is my creed.

My eyes, you know were never strong, and it was in the character of a carpenter that I almost put them out. The strains and the exertions of hard labour distended and relaxed the blood vessels to such a degree that inflammation ensued so painful that for a year I was in continual torment, and had so far lost the sight of one of them that I could distinguish with it nothing but the light in very faintly *there*. But a medicine of Elixior's, which I had never tried before, though two of his medicines I had used for many years, through God's mercy cured me almost in an instant, and my eyes are for the most part stronger and clearer now than they were when you used to see me daily. I shall write to Sephus soon for a supply of this medicine, for though I do not often want it, I would never be without it. He has always procured it for me.

I am heartily glad that your thoughts and ours coincided so exactly on the subject of the *Mulus*. I should be very sorry to see Signors and Signoris in the list of my subscribers, yet such a sight, as those warblers have so much the command of his purse, it is not at all impossible that I might encounter. He will necessarily hear of the work, and if he subscribes himself, it shall be quite sufficient. I rejoice at my success with Dr. Mity. He was probably that friend of Dr. Johnson's, who revised my first volume, and made a favourable report of it. But that knowledge of this last has diffused itself so much further, has been owing, my dear, principally to yourself. If Dr. Mity applied to you for permission to mention my Homer in his

next Review, it is plainly enough to be seen that from you he received, or by your means, my last publication *Vous avez beaucoup de courage, ma cousine*, in my cause. Neither the asperity of a critic professed, nor the frowns of a whole university whom I have censured, have any terrors for you, where you apprehend my interest is concerned. If Dr Jackson should not call me also a d —d fool, as well as Pope, I should not wonder if he were to give me as hard a name, or if my book were to be burnt at Carfax. But never mind, the book will do them no harm, if they do not quarrel with good counsel, and if they should, their resentment will do me none.

I must not conclude without a word in answer to your affectionate enquiries concerning the success of Dr Kerr's regimen. It has done all that in the course of so short a time I could expect from it. I have bid adieu to indigestions and heartburn. A spasmodic affection of the stomach in the night I am still troubled with, but in a less degree. In short, I have little doubt that perseverance in the course he has prescribed shall, by the blessing of God, restore me entirely. I have added to my dumb bells a rope, through which I jump, if I do not flutter myself, with as much agility as when a boy. This is much the best domestic exercise of the two.

I have a large interest in Staffordshire by means of the Bagot family, and yesterday brought me another letter from Walter Bagot, entreating me to hasten my specimen through the press, for that the nobles and the gents were all upon the point of flying to London. Lord Dartmouth is equally anxious on the same subject. Richard Howard formerly Richard Bagot, has subscribed another twenty pounds, and his brother Walter desires me to present him with my two volumes handsomely bound, to secure him the more in my interest.

My ever beloved cousin, adieu — Perfectly yours

W. C.

Oysters attend us duly. Thanks

Thank you, my dear, for galloping John. He rides well.

P. S. — I kept my letter unscaled to the last moment, that I might give you an account of the safe arrival of the

expected parcel. It is at all points worthy of the letter-writer. Snuff box, purse, notes, Bess, Puss, Fumey, all safe. Aguin, may God bless him!

CCCVXXIX

MATY CYRIL JACKSON.

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT.

MY DEAR AND FAITHFUL FRIEND,

Jan 23, 1786

The paragraph that I am now beginning will contain information of a kind that I am not very fond of communicating, and on a subject that I am not very fond of writing about. Only to you I will open my budget without reserve, because I know that in what concerns my authorship you take an interest that demands my confidence, and will be pleased with every occurrence that is at all propitious to my endeavours. Lady Hesketh, who, had she as many mouths as Virgil's June, with a tongue in each, would employ them all in my service, writes me word that Dr. Maty of the Museum has read my *Fask*. I cannot even to you relate what he says of it: though, when I began this story, I thought I had courage enough to tell it boldly. He designs however to give his opinion of it in his next monthly Review, and being informed that I was about to finish a translation of Homer, asked her Ladyship's leave to mention the circumstance on that occasion. This incident pleases me the more, because I have authentic intelligence of his being a critical character in all its forms, acute, sour, and blunt, and so incorruptible withal, and so unsusceptible of bias from undue motives, that, as my correspondent informs me, he would not praise his own mother, did he not think she deserved it.

The said *Fask* is likewise gone to Oxford, conveyed thither by an intimate friend of Dr. Jackson's with a purpose of putting it into his hands. My friend, what will they do with me at Oxford? Will they burn me at Carfax, or will they anathematize me with bell, book, and candle?

I can say with more truth than Ovid did,—*Parve nec
invidéo*

The said Dr Jackson has been heard to say, and I give you his own words, (stop both your ears while I utter them,) “that Homer has never been translated, and that Pope was a fool.” Very irreverent language to be sure, but in consideration of the subject on which he used them, we will pardon it, even in a dean. One of the masters of Ixton told a friend of mine lately, that a translation of Homer is much wanted. So now you have all my news.

Yours, my dear friend, cordially, W C

CCCXI.

**PRESENT FROM ANONYMOUS—IMPROVED HEALTH
—CONSENTS TO LET MATY SEE A BOOK OF
HIS HOMER.**

TO LADY HESKETH

Olney, Jan 31, 1786

It is very pleasant, my dearest cousin, to receive a present so delicately conveyed as that which I received so lately from Anonymous, but it is also very painful to have nobody to thank for it. I find myself, therefore, driven by stress of necessity to the following resolution, viz that I will constitute you my Thank receiver general for whatsoever gift I shall receive hereafter, as well as for those that I have already received from a nameless benefactor. I therefore thank you, my cousin, for a most elegant present, including the most elegant compliment that ever poet was honoured with, for a snuff box of tortoise-shell, with a beautiful landscape on the lid of it, glazed with crystal, having the figures of three hares in the fore-ground, and inscribed above with these words, *The Peasant's Nest* and below with these, *Tiney, Puss, and Bess*. For all and every of these I thank you, and also for standing proxy on this occasion. Nor must I forget to thank you, that so soon after I had sent you the first letter of Anonymous, I received another in the same hand.—There! Now I am a little easier.

I have almost conceived a design to send up half a dozen stout country fellows to tie by the leg to their respective bed-posts the company that so abridges your opportunity of writing to me. Your letters are the joy of my heart, and I cannot endure to be robbed, by I know not whom, of half my treasure. But there is no comfort without a drawback, and therefore it is that I, who have unknown friends, have unknown enemies also. Ever since I wrote last I find myself in better health, and my nocturnal spasms and fever considerably abated. I intend to write to Dr. Kerr on Thursday, that I may gratify him with an account of my amendment, for to him I know that it will be a gratification. Were he not a physician, I should regret that he lives so distant, for he is a most agreeable man, but being what he is, it would be impossible to have his company, even if he were a neighbour, unless in time of sickness. At which time, whatever charms he might have himself, my own must necessarily lose much of their effect on him.

When I wrote to you in dear, what I have already related to the General I am always fearful lest I should tell you that for news with which you are well acquainted. For once, however, I will venture. On Wednesday last I received from Johnson the MS. copy of a specimen that I had sent to the General, and, enclosed in the same cover, notes upon it by an unknown critic. Johnson, in a short letter, recommended him to me as a man of unquestionable learning and ability. On perusal and consideration of his remarks, I found him such, and having nothing so much to heart as to give all possible security to yours lie and the General, that my work shall not come forth unfinished I answered Johnson, that I would gladly submit my MS. to his friend. He is, in truth, a very clever fellow, perfectly stranger to me, and one who I promise you will not spare for severity of misadversion, where he shall find occasion. It is impossible for you, my dearest cousin, to express a wish that I do not equally feel a wish to gratify. You are desirous that Maty should see a book of my Homer and for that reason if Maty *will* see a book of it, he shall be welcome, although time is likely to be precious and consequently any delay, that is not absolutely necessary as much

as possible to be avoided. I am now revising the *Iliad*. It is a business that will cost me four months, perhaps five, for I compare the very words as I go, and if much alteration should occur, must transcribe the whole. The first book I have almost transcribed already. To these five months Johnson says that nine more must be added for printing, and upon my own experience, I will venture to assure you, that the tardiness of printers will make those nine months twelve. There is danger therefore that my subscribers may think that I make them wait too long, and that they who know me not may suspect a bubble. How glad shall I be to read it over in an evening, book by book, as fast as I settle the copy, to you and to Mrs. Unwin! She has been my touchstone always, and without reference to her taste and judgment I have printed nothing. With one of you at each elbow I should think myself the happiest of all poets.

The General and I, having broken the ice, are upon the most comfortable terms of correspondence. He writes very affectionately to me, and I say every thing to him that comes uppermost. I could not write frequently to any creature living upon any other terms than those. He tells me of infirmities that he has, which make him less active than he was. I am sorry to hear that he has any such. Alas! alas! he was young when I saw him, only twenty years ago.

I have the most affectionate letter imaginable from Colman, who writes to me like a brother. The Chancellor is yet dumb.

May God have you in his keeping, my beloved cousin.

Farewell W. C.

CCCXLI >

**JOYFUL EXPECTATIONS OF HER PROMISED VISIT
—WHAT SHE IS TO EXPECT.**

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, Feb 9, 1786

I HAVE been impatient to tell you that I am impatient to see you again. Mrs. Unwin partakes with me in all my

feelings upon this subject, and longs also to see you. I should have told you so by the last post, but have been so completely occupied by this tormenting specimen, that it was impossible to do it. I sent the General a letter on Monday, that would distress and alarm him, I sent him another yesterday, that will, I hope, quiet him again. John's son has apologized very civilly for the multitude of his friend's strictures, and his friend has promised to confine himself in future to a comparison of me with the original, so that, I doubt not, we shall jog on merrily together. And now, my dear, let me tell you once more, that your kindness, in promising us a visit has charmed us both. I shall see you again. I shall hear your voice. We shall take walks together. I will show you my prospects, the hovel, the alcove, the Ouse, and its banks, every thing that I have described. I anticipate the pleasure of those days not very far distant, and feel a part of it at this moment. Talk not of an inn! Mention it not for your life! We have never had so many visitors, but we could easily accommodate them all, though we have received Unwin, and his wife, and his sister, and his son all at once. My dear, I will not let you come till the end of May or beginning of June, because before that time my greenhouse will not be ready to receive us, and it is the only pleasant room belonging to us. When the plants go out, we go in. I line it with mats, and spread the floor with mats, and there you shall sit with a bed of mignonette at your side, and a hedge of honey-suckles, roses, and jasmine. and I will make you a bouquet of myrtle every day. Sooner than the time I mention the country will not be in complete beauty. And I will tell you what you shall find at your first entrance. Imprimis, as soon as you have entered the vestibule, if you cast a look on either side of you, you shall see on the right hand a box of my making. It is the box in which have been lodged all my hages, and in which lodges Puss at present. But he poor fellow, is worn out with age, and promises to die before you can see him. On the right hand stands a cupboard, the work of the same author, it was once a dovecage, but I transformed it. Opposite to you stands a table, which I also made. But a merciless servant having

scrubbed it until it became paralytic, it serves no purpose now but of ornament, and all my clean shoes stand under it. On the left hand, at the further end of this superb vestibule, you will find the door of the parlour, into which I will conduct you, and where I will introduce you to Mrs Unwin, unless we should meet her before, and where we will be as happy as the day is long. Order yourself, my cousin, to the Swan at Newport, and there you shall find me ready to conduct you to Olney.

My dear, I have told Homer what you say about casks and urns, and have asked him, whether he is sure that it is a cask in which Jupiter keeps his wine. He swears that it is a cask, and that it will never be any thing better than a cask to eternity. So if the god is content with it, we must even wonder at his taste, and be so too.

Adieu ! my dearest, dearest cousin

W C

CCCXII

VEXATIOUS CRITICISMS—THURLOW'S FORMER PROMISE

TO LADY HILSKETH

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, Feb 11, 1786

It must be, I suppose, a fortnight or thereabout since I wrote last, I feel myself so alert and so ready to write again. Be that as it may, here I come. We talk of nobody but you. What we will do with you when we get you, where you shall walk, where you shall sleep, in short, every thing that bears the remotest relation to your well being at Olney, occupies all our talking time,—which is all that I do not spend at Iroy.

I have every reason for writing to you as often as I can, but I have a particular reason for doing it now. I want to tell you that by the Diligence on Wednesday next, I mean to send you a quire of my Homer for Maty's perusal. It will contain the first book, and as much of the second as brings us to the catalogue of the ships, and is every morsel of the revised copy that I have transcribed. My dearest cousin, read it yourself, let the General read it do what you please with it, so that it reach Johnson in

due time. But let Maty be the only *critic* that has any thing to do with it. The vexation, the perplexity, that attends a multiplicity of criticisms by various kinds, many of which are sure to be futile, many of them ill founded, and some of them contradictory to others, is inconceivable, except by the author, whose ill fated work happens to be the subject of them. This also appears to me self-evident, that if a work have passed under the review of one man of taste and learning, and have the good fortune to please him, his approbation gives security for that of all others qualified like himself. I speak thus, my dear, after having just escaped from such a storm of trouble, occasioned by endless remarks, hints, suggestions, and objections, as drove me almost to despair, and to the very verge of a resolution to drop my undertaking for ever. With infinite difficulty I at last sifted the chaff from the wheat, availed myself of what appeared to me to be just, and rejected the rest, but not till the labour and anxiety had nearly undone all that Kerr had been doing for me. My beloved cousin, trust me for it, as you safely may, that temper, vanity, and self importance, had nothing to do in all this distress that I suffered. It was merely the effect of an alarm, that I could not help taking, when I compared the great trouble I had with a few lines only, thus handled, with that which I foresaw such handling of the whole must necessarily give me. I felt beforehand that my constitution would not bear it. I shall send up this second specimen in a box that I have had made on purpose, and when Maty has done with the copy, and you have done with it yourself, then you must return it in said box to my translatorship. Though Johnson's friend has teased me sadly, I verily believe that I shall have no more such cause to complain of him. We now understand one another, and I firmly believe that I might have gone the world through, before I had found his equal in an accurate and familiar acquaintance with the original.

A letter to Mr Urban in the last Gentleman's Magazine, of which F's book is the subject, pleases me more than any thing I have seen in the way of eulogium yet. I have not guess of the author.

I do not wish to remind the Chancellor of his promise. Ask you why, my cousin? Because I suppose it would be impossible. He has no doubt, forgotten it entirely, and would be obliged to take my word for the truth of it, which I could not bear. We drank tea together with Mrs. C———e, and her sister, in King Street Bloomsbury and there was the promise made. I said—"Thurlow, I am nobody, and shall be always nobody, and you will be Chancellor. You shall provide for me when you are." He smiled, and replied, 'I surely will'—"These ladies," said I, "are witnesses." He still smiled, and said—"If them be so, for I will certainly do it." But alas! twenty-four years have passed since the day of the date thereof, and to mention it now would be to upbraid him with inattention to his plighted troth. Neither do I suppose he could easily serve such a creature as I am, if he would. Adieu, whom I love entirely, W. C.

CCCXI III

**ARRANGEMENTS FOR HER COMING - HOMER
- HIS CRITICS.**

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAREST COUSIN, Olney, Feb. 19, 1780
SINCE so it must be, so it shall be. If you will not sleep under the roof of a friend, may you never sleep under the roof of an enemy! An enemy, however, you will not presently find. Mrs. Unwin bids me mention her affectionately, and tell you that she willingly gives up a part, for the sake of the rest, willingly, at least, as far as willingly may consist with some reluctance. I feel my reluctance too. Our design was, that you should have slept in the room that serves me for a study, and its having been occupied by you would have been an additional recommendation of it to me. But all reluctances are superseded by the thought of seeing you, and because we have nothing so much at heart as the wish to see you happy and comfortable, we are desirous therefore to accommodate you to your own mind, and not to ours. Mrs. Unwin has already secured for you an apartment, or rather two, just such as we could wish. The

house in which you will find them is within thirty yards of our own, and opposite to it. The whole affair is thus commodiously adjusted, and now I have nothing to do but to wish for June, and June, my cousin, was never so wished for since June was made. I shall have a thousand things to hear, and a thousand to say, and they will all rush into my mind together, till it will be so crowded with things impatient to be said, that for some time I shall say nothing. But no matter,—sooner or later they will all come out, and since we shall have you the longer for not having you under our own roof, (a circumstance, that, more than any thing, reconciles us to this measure,) they will stand the better chance. After so long a separation, a separation that of late seemed likely to last for life, we shall meet each other as alive from the dead, and for my own part I can truly say, that I have not a friend in the other world whose resurrection would give me greater pleasure.

I am truly happy, my dear, in having pleased you with what you have seen of my Homer. I wish that all English readers had your unsophisticated, or rather unadulterated taste, and could relish simplicity like you. But I am well aware that in this respect I am under a disadvantage, and that many, especially many ladies, missing in my turns and prettinesses of expression that they have admired in Pope, will account my translation in those particulars defective. But I comfort myself with the thought that in reality it is no defect, on the contrary, that the want of all such embellishments as do not belong to the original will be one of its principal merits with persons indeed capable of relishing Homer. He is the best poet that ever lived for many reasons, but for none more than for that majestic plainness that distinguishes him from all others. As an accomplished person moves gracefully without thinking of it, in like manner the dignity of Homer seems to cost him no labour. It was natural to him to say great things, and to say them well, and little ornaments were beneath his notice. If Maty, my dearest cousin, should return to you my copy with any such strictures as may make it necessary for me to see it again, before it goes to Johnson, in that case you shall

send it to me otherwise to Johnson immediately, for he writes me word he wishes his friend to go to work upon it as soon as possible. When you come, my dear, we will hang all these critics together, for they have worried me without remorse or conscience at least one of them has. I had actually murdered more than a few of the best lines in the specimen, in compliance with his requisitions, but plucked up my courage at last, and in the very last opportunity that I had, recovered them to life again by restoring the original reading. At the same time I readily confess that the specimen is the better for all this discipline its author has undergone, but then it has been more indebted for its improvement to that pointed accuracy of examination, to which I was myself excited, than to any proposed amendments from Mr. Critic, for as sure as you are my cousin whom I long to see at Olney, so surely would he have done me irreparable mischief, if I would have given him leave.

Mr. friend Bagot writes to me in a most friendly strain and calls loudly upon me for original poetry. When I shall have done with Homer, probably he will not call in vain. Having found the prime feather of a swan on the banks of the *smug and silver Trent*, he keeps it for me.

Adieu, my dear cousin W. C.

I am sorry that the General has such indifferent health. He must not die. I can by no means spare a person so kind to me.

CCCLIV.

ON MRS. BAGOT'S DEATH.

TO THE REV. WAITER BAGOT

Olney, Feb. 27, 1796

Alas! alas! my dear, dear friend, may God himself comfort you! I will not be so absurd as to attempt it. By the close of your letter it should seem, that in this hour of great trial he withholds not his consolations from you. I know by experience that they are neither few nor small and though I feel for you as I never felt for man before yet do I sincerely rejoice in this, that whereas there is but

one true comforter in the universe, under afflictions such as yours, you both know him, and know where to seek him. I thought you a man the most happily mated that I had ever seen, and had great pleasure in your felicity. Pardon me, if now I feel a wish that, short as my acquaintance with her was, I had never seen her. I should have mourned with you, but not as I do now. Mrs Unwin sympathizes with you also most sincerely, and you neither are, nor will be soon forgotten in such prayers as we can make at Olney. I will not detain you longer now, my poor afflicted friend, than to commit you to the tender mercy of God, and to bid you a sorrowful adieu!

Adieu! ever yours,

W C

CCCLX

DREAM OF HER ARRIVAL—MRS BAGOT—GENERAL COWPER'S CRITICISMS HIS QUESTION CONCERNING MRS UNWIN NOTICED—LADY AUSTEN

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Mon'd Feb 27, 1786

As I sat by the fireside this day after dinner I saw your chamber windows coated over with snow, so that the glass was hardly visible. This circumstance naturally suggested the thought that it will be otherwise when you come. Then the roses will begin to blow, and perhaps the heat will be as troublesome as the cold is now. The next thought of course was this,—three long months must pass before we shall see her! I will, however, be as patient as I can, and comfort myself with the thought that we shall meet at last. You said in one of your letters that you had resolved to dream of nobody but of Homer and his translator. I hope you keep your resolution, for I can assure you that the last-mentioned dream is most comfortably of you. About three nights since I dreamed that, sitting in our summer house, I saw you coming towards me. *With inexpressible pleasure I sprang to meet you, caught you in my arms, and said, 'Oh my precious, precious cousin, may God make me thankful that*

I see thy face again ! Now, this was a dream, and no dream,—it was only a shadow while it lasted, but if we both live, and live to meet, it will be realized hereafter. Yet alas ! the passages and events of the day as well as of the night are little better than dreams. Poor Bagot ! whom I love sincerely because he has a singular affection for me. Ten days since he wrote me a letter, by which it appeared he was cheerful and happy. Yesterday brought me another, consisting of only about six lines, in which he tells me that his wife is dead. I transcribe it, for it is impossible to do it justice any other way.

"Oh my dear friend—Things are much altered with me since I wrote last. My harp is turned into mourning, and my music into the voice of weeping. Her whom you saw and loved,—her whom nobody ever yet saw and knew that did not love, her have I lost. Pray to God for me, that for Christ's sake he would continue to comfort and support both me and mine under our great affliction.

Yours ever,

"Blithfield, Feb 23, 1796

WALT BAGOT "

Poor man ! I can attest the truth of what he says from my own knowledge of her, however short. There are people whose characters we penetrate and fully comprehend in a moment. She was one of those. Her character was so strongly marked in the gentleness of her aspect, her voice, her carriage, that the instant she was seen she was beloved. My knowledge of her was two hours long, and no more, yet when I took leave of her, I could not help saying, God bless you, madam ! Indeed, my cousin, I never felt so much for any man. His own sensibilities are naturally of the quickest, and he was attached to her in the extreme, so it was impossible but that he must be. Mr Madan's book happened to be mentioned when he was here, when all he said of it was—"I know not how Mr Madan finds it but the longer I know my wife, the more I love her." At that time I had never seen her, but when I did I wondered not.

I hardly know how to leave this subject for another, but it is necessary that I should. So farewell, poor Bagot, for the present, may God comfort thee and thy seven children !

—Now for Homer, and the matters to Homer appertaining. Scephus and I are of opinions perfectly different on the subject of such an advertisement as he recommends. The only proper part for me is not to know that such a man as Pope has ever existed. I am so much upon this subject that in that note in the specimen, in which I have accounted for the anger of Achilles, (which, I believe, I may pay myself the compliment to say was never accounted for before,) I have not even so much as hinted at the perplexity in which Pope was entangled when he endeavoured to explain it, nor at the preposterous and blundering work that he has made with it. No, my dear, as I told you once before, my attempt has itself a loud voice, and speaks a most intelligible language. Had Pope's translation been good, or had I thought it such, or had I not known that it is admitted by all whom a knowledge of the original qualifies to judge of it, to be a very defective one, I had never translated myself one line of Homer. Dr Johnson is the only modern writer who has spoken of it in terms of approbation, at least the only one that I have met with. And his praise of it is such as convinces me, intimately acquainted as I am with Pope's performance, that he talked at random, that either he had never examined it by Homer's, or never since he was a boy. For I would undertake to produce numberless passages from it, if need were, not only ill translated, but meanly written. It is not therefore for me, convinced as I am of the truth of all I say, to go forth into the world holding up Pope's translation with one hand as a work to be extolled, and my own with the other as a work still wanted. It is plain to me that I behave with sufficient liberality on the occasion if, neither praising nor blaming my predecessor, I go right forward, and leave the world to decide between us.

Now, to come nearer to myself. Poets, my dear, (it is a secret I have lately discovered,) are born to trouble, and of all poets, translators of Homer to the most. Our dear friend, the General, whom I truly love, in his last letter mortified me not a little. I do not mean by suggesting lines that he thought might be amended, for I hardly ever

wrote fifty lines together that I could not afterwards have improved, but by what appeared to me an implied censure on the whole, or nearly the whole quire that I sent to you It was a great work, he said, it should be kept long in hand, - years, if it were possible, that it stood in need of much amendment, that it ought to be made worthy of me, that he could not think of showing it to Maty, that he could not even think of laying it before Johnson and his friend in its present condition Now, my dear, understand thou this if there lives a man who stands clear of the charge of careless writing, I am that man I might prudently, perhaps, but I could not honestly, admit that charge It would account in a way favourable to my own ability for many defects of which I am guilty, but it would be disingenuous and untrue The copy which I sent to you was almost a new, I mean a second, translation, as far as it went With the first I had taken pains, but with the second I took more I weighed many expressions, exacted from myself the utmost fidelity to my author, and tried all the numbers upon my own ear again and again If, therefore, after all this care, the execution be such as in the General's account it seems to be, I appear to have made shipwreck of my hopes at once He said indeed, that the smiles delighted him, and the catalogue of the ships surpassed his expectations but his commendation of so small a portion of the whole affected me rather painfully, as it seemed to amount to an implied condemnation of the rest I have been the more uneasy because I know his taste to be good, and by the selection that he made of lines that he thought should be altered, he proved it such I altered them all, and thanked him, as I could very sincerely, for his friendly attention Now what is the present state of my mind on this subject? It is this I do not myself think ill of what I have done, nor at the same time so foolishly well as to suppose that it has no blemishes But I am sadly afraid that the General's anxiety will make him extremely difficult to be pleased & I fear that he will require of me more than any other man would require, or than he himself would require of any other writer. What I can do to give him satisfaction, I am perfectly

ready to do, but it is possible for an anxious friend to demand more than my ability could perform. Not a syllable of all this, my dear, to him or to any creature.—Mum!

Your question, your natural, well warranted, and most reasonable question concerning me and Mrs. Unwin, shall be answered at large when we meet. But to Mrs. Unwin I refer you for that answer, she is most desirous to give you a most explicit one. I have a history, my dear, belonging to me, which I am not the proper person to relate. You have heard somewhat of it, — as much as it was possible for me to write, but that *somewhat* bears a most inconsiderable proportion to the whole.

All intercourse has ceased between us and Lady Austen almost these two years. This mystery shall also be accounted for when you come. She has left Bristol, and is at present settled within a mile of us with her sister. You are candid, and will give me credit when I say that the fault is not with us.

I have disposed of the thirteen papers of Proposals, even I. Mr. Throckmorton has most obligingly given me his name, and has undertaken the disposal of twelve. Lord Archibald Hamilton has also subscribed, at the instance of a neighbour of mine, and does me the honour to say that he subscribes with pleasure. Adieu my beloved cousin, thank you for all your welcome intelligence. I had need of it.

Yours, most truly, WM. COWPER.

CCCLVI

ELISIONS—PLEASED WITH HIS BOOKSELLER'S CONDUCT

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Okeby, March 6. 1796

YOUR opinion has more weight with me than that of all the critics in the world, and to give you a proof of it, I make you a concession that I would hardly have made to them all united. I do not indeed absolutely covenant, promise, and agree, that I will discard *all* my elisions, but I hereby

bind myself to dismiss *as many* of them as, without sacrificing energy to sound, I can. It is incumbent upon me in the mean time to say something in justification of the few that I shall retain, that I may not seem a poet mounted rather on a mule than on Pegasus. In the first place, *The* is a barbarism. We are indebted for it to the Celts, or the Goths, or to the Saxons, and perhaps to them all. In the two best languages that ever were spoken, the Greek and the Latin, there is no similar incumbrance of expression to be found. Secondly, the perpetual use of it in our language is to us miserable poets attended with two great inconveniences. Our verse, consisting only of ten syllables, it not unfrequently happens that a fifth part of a line is to be engrossed, and necessarily, too, (unless elision prevents it,) by this abominable intruder, and, which is worse in my account, open vowels are continually the consequence.—*The* element—*The* air, &c. Thirdly, the French, who are equally with the English chargeable with barbarism in this particular, dispose of their *Le* and their *La* without ceremony, and always take care that they shall be absorbed, both in verse and in prose, in the vowel that immediately follows them. Fourthly, and I believe lastly, (and for your sake I wish it may prove so), the practice of cutting short a *The* is warranted by Milton, who of all English poets that ever lived, had certainly the finest ear. Dr. Warton, indeed, has dared to say that he had a bad one, for which he deserves, as far as critical demerit can deserve it, to lose his own. I thought I had done, but still there is a fifthly behind, and it is this,—that the custom of abbreviating *Th* belongs to the style in which, in my advertisement annexed to the specimen, I profess to write. The use of that style would have warranted me in the practice of much greater liberty of this sort than I ever intended to take. In perfect consistence with that style I might say *I' th' tempest*, *I' th' door-way*, &c, which, however, I would not allow myself to do, because I was aware that it would be objected to, and with reason. But it seems to me for the causes above said, that when I shorten *The*, before a vowel, or before *wh*, as in the line you mention,

“Than *th'* whole broad Hellespont in all his parts,”

my licence is not equally exceptionable, because *H*, though he rank as a consonant in the word *ahok*, is not allowed to announce himself to the ear, and *H* is an aspirate. But as I said at the beginning, so say I still,—I am most willing to conform myself to your very sensible observation, that it is necessary, if we would please, to consult the taste of our own day, neither would I have pelted you, my dearest cousin, with any part of this volley of good reasons, had I not designed them as an answer to those objections which you say you have heard from others. But I only mention them. Though satisfactory to myself, I waive them, and will allow to *Zhe* his whole dimensions, whensoever it can be done.

Thou only critic of my verse that is to be found in all the earth, whom I love, what shall I say in answer to your own objection to that passage, —

"Sottly he plued his hand
On th' old man's hand, and push'd it gently away."

I can say neither more nor less than this, that when our dear friend, the General, sent me his opinion of the specimen, quoting those very words from it, he added, "With this part I was particularly pleased, there is nothing in poetry more descriptive." Such were his very words. Taste, my dear, is various, there is nothing so various, and even between persons of the best taste there are diversities of opinion on the same subject, for which it is not possible to account. So much for these matters.

You advise me to consult the General, and to confide in him. I follow your advice, and have done both. By the last post I asked his permission to send him the books of my Homer as fast as I should finish them off. I shall be glad of his remarks, and more glad than of any thing to do that which I hope may be agreeable to him. They will of course pass into your hands before they are sent to Johnson. The quire that I sent is now in the hands of Johnson's friend. I intended to have told you in my last, but forgot it, that Johnson behaves very handsomely in the affair of my two volumes. He acts with a liberality not often found in persons of his occupation, and to mention it, when occasion calls me to it, is a justice due to him.

I am very much pleased with Mr Stanley's letter. Several compliments were paid me, on the subject of that first volume, by my own friends, but I do not recollect that I ever knew the opinion of a stranger about it before, whether favourable or otherwise. I only heard by a side wind, that it was very much read in Scotland, and more than here.

Farewell, my dearest cousin, whom we expect, of whom we talk continually, and whom we continually long for

W C

Your anxious wishes for my success delight me, and you may rest assured, my dear, that I have all the ambition on the subject that you can wish me to feel. I more than admire my author. I often stand astonished at his beauties. I am for ever amused with the translation of him, and I have received a thousand encouragements. These are all so many happy omens, that I hope shall be verified by the event.

CCCLXVII

BEGGING TO BE RELEASED FROM A PROMISE OF PUTTING THE MS INTO HIS HANDS, BECAUSE IT MUST BE SENT TO RUSSELL.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

March 13, 1786

I SHAM to be about to write to you, but I foresee that it will not be a letter, but a scrap that I shall send you. I could tell you things that, knowing how much you interest yourself in my success, I am sure would please you; but every moment of my leisure is necessarily spent at Troy. I am revising my translation, and bestowing on it more labour than at first. At the repeated and earnest solicitation of General Cowper, who had doubtless irrefragable reason on his side, I have put my book into the hands of the most extraordinary critic that I have ever heard of. He is a Swiss, a painter in the historical way, has an accurate knowledge of English, and for his knowledge of Homer has, I verily believe, no fellow. Johnson recommended him to me. I am to send him the quires as fast I finish them off.

and the first is now in his hands. I have the comfort to be able to tell you, that he is very much pleased with what he has seen. Johnson wrote to me lately on purpose to tell me so. Things having taken this turn, I fear that I must beg a release from my engagement to put the MS. into your hands. I am bound to print as soon as three hundred shall have subscribed, and consequently have not an hour to spare.

People generally love to go where they are admired, yet Lady Hesketh complains of not having seen you.

Yours, W. C.

CCCLXIII

**OBJECTING TO ANY DELAY OF HER VISIT, AND
ASSURING HER THAT HE NO LONGER OBTRUDES
HIS RELIGIOUS SENTIMENTS ON OTHERS - LET-
TER FROM MARTIN MADAN.**

TO LADY HESKETH

April 3 Mond 1786

HAVE you the hardness to bid me wait till August for your coming, or even to suggest such an idea to me, who have been so long numbering off days and weeks with impatient expectation of June? My cousin, I will not wait till August, neither can Mrs. Unwin wait till August. I insist, and she enters it, that you come at the time appointed. Is there any thing future to which we look forward with equal pleasure? With pleasure, indeed, we expect the General, I have not, save yourself, a friend whom I should expect with more, but you with pleasure peculiar and above all. Come then! difficulties will perhaps vanish at your appearance, fifty points may be adjusted when you are on the spot, not one of which can be touched without you. Oh this be sure, that by some means or other you shall have a place at Olney. The project in hand will probably in the end succeed, and if it should not, others may be started, but not till you come. You have given a hope that will not be relinquished while in Olney may be found one brick or stone upon another. A lodging for the present is ready for you, even should you come to-morrow.

I love you, and thank you for all your hints concerning the General. Suspect not from any thing said above, that my affection for him is not as warm as you wish it to be. It is, and will, I doubt not, increase in fervour. But with him I have an intimacy to make. With you I have always had one, however long interrupted, and the place that you have held with me, you will ever hold, should we outlive the years of Methusalem. But, as I said, I thank you for those hints, and if he have any little likings to be gratified, (for who has not some ?) you cannot do a kinder thing by us than to give us instruction in them all, for we sincerely wish to make his abode here as pleasant to him as possible. Henry comes with him. Give me a little history of *him* also, for him I have never seen since he was an urchin. As to the affair of religious conversation, fear me not lest I should trespass upon his peace in that way. Your views, my dear, upon the subject of a proper conduct in that particular, are mine also. When I left St. Alban's, I left it under impressions of the existence of a God, and of the truth of Scripture, that I had never felt before. I had unspeakable delight in the discovery and was impatient to communicate a pleasure to others that I found so superior to everything that bears the name. This eagerness of spirit, natural to persons newly informed, and the less to be wondered at in me who had just emerged from the horrors of despair, made me imprudent, and, I doubt not, troublesome to many. Forgetting that I had not *those* blessings at my command, which it is God's peculiar prerogative to impart spiritual light and affections, I required, in effect, of all with whom I conversed that they should see with my eyes, and stood amazed that the Gospel, which with me was all in all, should meet with opposition, or should occasion disgust in any. But the Gospel could not be the word of God if it did not, for it foretells its own reception among men and describes it as exactly such. Good is intended, but harm is done too often by the zeal with which I was at that time animated. But as in affairs of this life, so in religious concerns likewise, experience begets some wisdom in all who are not incapable of being taught. I do not

now, neither have I for a long time, made it my practice to force the subject of evangelical truth on any. I received it not from man myself, neither can any man receive it from me. God is light, and from him all light must come to *His* teaching, therefore, I leave those whom I was once so alert to instruct myself. If a man asks my opinion, or calls for an account of my faith, he shall have it, otherwise I trouble him not. Pulpits for preaching, and the parlour, the garden, and the walk abroad for friendly and agreeable conversation.

I am grieved at what you tell me of the General's state of health. I fear that he carries his death's wound about him. The precariousness of *his* life makes me feel, if possible, the more comfort that yours seem to be held by a stronger tenure. May you be spared as long as I am spared, for having found you again, I am determined never to lose you more. I am delighted too that my uncle at his years is so stout. May he long continue so!

Mr. Madan and I were never correspondents. Once or twice, however, I have had an occasional letter from him, and last Friday brought me another. I was, as you may suppose, surprised. He wrote merely to rectify, as he accounts it my typography. *Plac'd* he would have printed *plac'd*, and so of all words terminating in *ed*, and usually in former times abridged. But I shall not accede. I cannot indeed, to his counsel. Johnson long since, and the General lately, recommended to me the contrary practice, and the fashion of the day makes it necessary. It is also a real improvement, for the judgment corrects the eye, and in reading reduces the syllables to their just number. Add to which, we have no need to make pronunciation of our language more difficult to foreigners than it is of necessity, which yet must be the certain consequence of spelling one way and pronouncing another. For *plac'd*, according to the rule by which we make *e* before a consonant hard, ought to pronounced *pluck'd*. But too much of this. He wrote me a dry letter, but *some things* considered, it did him honour in my account, because it proves that he interests himself in my work, notwithstanding all.

I wrote, my dearest cousin, to the General on Saturday,

and then told him that he would not receive my bundle of poetry in less than a fortnight. At that time I thought of detaining the third, fourth and fifth books till I should have re-revised the first, and then that I would send them all at once. But I have changed my mind. Fusch is at present out of work. It would not be civil to make him wait long for more, and the three last-mentioned books are ready. I shall therefore, as before, send them to you, you will communicate with the General, and he to Fusch. They will set off on Wednesday by Wellingborough coach. The first quire destined to Dr. Mait's inspection I am now going to take in hand. Should I find it necessary to transcribe the whole or much of it, that business, and the correction of it together, will necessarily take time, but you shall have it as soon as possible. My dear, stroke my pate, and say that I am a good child. I send you, I suppose, above two thousand lines, and not two hundred in the whole of the first translation. In fact, I am making a new translation and find that the work will be much a gainer by it. I grudge no pains so that I may but be a famous poet, and make you as proud as I wish you to be of your cousin in a corner. *À propos de ça*,—if I have not visited my neighbours, it has been owing to many lions in the way, to a dread of strangers, increased by having seen none for many years, to a total incapacity through indisposition, but very lately, in part, removed, and to necessity, arising from the following important consideration, I keep no horse, and the hackneys of Olney are not ostensible, chaises are become more expensive than ever, and some of the country gentlemen (Mr. Wright in particular) who have made advances, live too distant to be reached on foot. I have not sent to Kerr for these reasons, he depended, by his own avowal, principally on emetics, which seem to fail, though I have neither exceeded nor fallen short, the tincture that he has given me is, by his account of it, of two that are the best in the world for stomach cases, the most efficacious, therefore nothing better is to be expected from him of that kind, and the approaching summer gives me hope better founded than any I can build upon medicine, of open pores, and consequently of relief, if not of a cure. My fever is not worth

a thought. I suppose I have had more or less of it almost all my life—I am now runnaging things together—I dedicate to whomsoever you shall choose—I have two dozen of wine and four bottles—If you should call at Debrett's, pray search the book for the name of Throckmorton in particular. I knew not that Sephus had so ennobled my subscription, till you told me. I hold myself much obliged to him, and so shall tell him, when time shall serve. I love and honour my uncle for his very handsome notice of me on the occasion. Our politics do not jir, in the principle we are two tallies. I only differ from you a little touching the king's head. He had, through ill advice or want of honesty, acted with great duplicity. He was either to reign or die, there was no alternative. None dared to trust him,—the axe was the consequence. Adieu, my dear-fellow pilgrim in all our pleasant places, for such you shall be.

Ever affectionately yours, WM COWPER.

I tell you a remarkable coincidence of dates and events. I received your present of wine on my birth-day, November 26, the dusk on the 7th of December, the day when I left London, and my snuff box, &c from Anonymous on the 24th of January, on which day, twelve years ago, I plunged into a melancholy that made me almost an infant. I cannot bear to be so concise as want of room obliged me to be on the other side, respecting the wine. Your kindness in making the inquiry is to me better than the wine itself; this is a literal truth, and you may credit it without the least reserve. I had a little of my own when the hamper came, which is the cause of my present abundance. Once more bless you!

The most evident necessity presents itself for your coming in June. We just now learn that these clever apartments cannot be hid. The son is to succeed the apprentice in the second chamber. We have offered a bed in our house during your stay, but it is not accepted. There is a tight little house opposite, which I dare say you may have, that will hold you and suite, but it has a west aspect. Perhaps by open windows and curtains it might be kept cool. Mother and daughter only live in it.

Mrs. Unwin begs me to give her most affectionate respects. If you understood Latin, I could tell you, in an elegant line from Horace, how much we both think of you, and talk of you, and long to see you. Dearest cousin, adieu!

We have expedients *in petto* for settling you at Olney, some of which will surely succeed, but which we will not discuss till you come, that is to say—in June. This is positively the last postscript.

CCCXLIX

**IMPOSSIBLE FOR HIM TO REMOVE TO HADLEY—
MR. BURROWS—LODGING HUNTING—PART OF
THE VICARAGE TAKEN FOR LADY HESKETH.**

TO LADY HESKETH

Monday, April 10, 1798

THAT'S my good cousin! now I love you! now I will think of June as you do, that it is the pleasantest of all months, unless you should happen to be here in November too, and make it equally delightful. Before I shall have finished my letter, Mrs. Unwin will have taken a view of the house concerning which you inquire, and I shall be able to give you a circumstantial account of it. The man who built it is lately dead. He had been a common sailor, and assisted under Wolfe and Amherst at the taking of Quebec. When we came hither he was almost penniless, but climbing by degrees into the lacebusiness, amassed money, and built the house in question. Just before he died, having an enterprising genius, he put almost his whole substance to hazard in sending a large cargo of lace to America, and the venture failing, he has left his widow in penury and distress. For this reason, I conclude that she will have no objection to letting as much of her house as my cousin will have occasion for, and have therefore given you this short history of the matter. The bed is the best in the town; and the honest tar's folly was much laughed at, when it was known that he, who had so often swung in a hammock, had given twenty pounds for a bed. But now I begin to hope that

he made a wiser bargain than I once thought it. She is no gentlewoman, as you may suppose, but she is nevertheless a very quiet, decent, sober body, and well respected among her neighbours.

But Hadley, my dearest cousin, what is to be said of Hadley? Only this at present, that having such an inhabitant as Mr Burrows, and the hope belonging to it of such another inhabitant as yourself, it has all charms, all possible recommendations. Yes, had I the wings that David wished for, I would surely stretch them to their utmost extent that I might reach any place where I should have you to converse with perhaps half the year. But alas, my dear, instead of wings, I have a chain and a collar, the history of which collar and chain Mrs Unwin shall give you when you come, else I would fly, and she would fly also, with the utmost alacrity to Hadley, or whithersoever you should call us, for Olney has no hold upon us in particular. Here have we no family connexions, no neighbours with whom we can associate, no friendships. If the country is pleasant, so also are other countries, and so far as income is concerned, we should not, I suppose, find ourselves in a more expensive situation at Hadley, or any where, than here. But there are lets and hinderances which no power of man can remove, which will make your poor heart ache, my dear, when you come to know them. I will not say that they can never be removed, because I will not set bounds to that which has no bounds—the mercy of God, but of the removal of them there is no present apparent probability. I knew a Mr Burrows once, it was when I lived in the Temple, so far knew him that we simpered at each other when we met, and on opposite sides of the way touched hats. This Mr. Burrows, though at that time a young man, was rather remarkable for corpulence, and yet tall. He was at the bar. On a sudden I missed him, and was informed soon after that he had taken orders. Is it possible that your Mr Burrows and mine can be the same? The imagination is not famous for taking good likenesses of persons and faces that we never saw. In general the picture that we draw in our minds of an *inconnu* is of all possible pictures the most unlike the original. So

it has happened to me in this instance : my fancy assured me that Mr Burrows was a slim, elegant young man, dressed always to the very point of exactness, with a sharp face, a small voice, a delicate address, and the gentlest manners. Such was my dream of Mr Burrows, and how my dream of him came to be such I know not, unless it arose from what I seemed to have collected out of the several letters in which you have mentioned him. From them I learned that he has wit, sense, taste, and genius, with which qualities I do not generally connect the ideas of bulk and rotundity, and from them I also learned that he has numerous connexions at your end of the town, where the company of those who have anything rough in their exterior is least likely to be coveted. So it must have come to pass that I made to myself such a very unsuitable representation of him. But I am not sorry that he is such as he is. He is no loser by the bargain, in my account. I am not the less delighted with his high approbation, and wish for no better fortune as a poet, than always so to please such men as Mr Burrows. I will not say, my dear, that you yourself gain any advantage in my opinion by the difference ; for to seat you higher there than you were always seated, is not possible. I will only observe in this instance, as always in all instances, I discover a proof of your own good sense and discernment, who finding in Mr Burrows a mind so deserving of your esteem and regard, have not suffered your eye to prejudice you against it, a *faux pas* into which I have known ladies of very good understanding betrayed ere now, I assure you. Had there been a question last year of our meeting at Olney, I should have felt myself particularly interested in this attention of yours to the figure, for the sake of its contents, for at that time I had rather more body than it became a man who pretends to public approbation as a poet, to carry about him. But, thanks to Mr Kerr, I do not at present measure an inch more in the girth than is perfectly consistent with the highest pretensions in that way. Apollo himself is hardly less chargeable with prominence about the waist than I am.

I by no means insist upon making ladies of the Trojan women, unless I can reconcile you to the term. But I must

observe in the first place, that though in our language the word be of modern use, it is likewise very ancient. We read in our oldest Bibles of the elect *Lady*, and of Babylon the *Lady* of kingdoms. In the next place, the Grecians, Homer at least, when a woman of rank is accosted, takes care in many instances that she shall be addressed in a style suited to her condition, for which purpose he employs a word more magnificent in its amount than even lady, and which literally signifies very little less than goddess. The word that I mean—that I may make it legible to you, is *Daimonic*. There were, no doubt, in Troy,—but I will say no more of it. I have that to write about to my English lady, that makes all the ladies of antiquity nothing worth to me.

We are at this moment returned from the house above mentioned. The parlour is small and neat, not a mere cupboard, but very passable. The chamber is better, and quite smart. There is a little room close to your own for Mrs. Eaton, and there is room for Cooke and Samuel. The terms are half a guinea a week, but it seems as if we were never to take a step without a stumble. The kitchen is bad,—it has, indeed, never been used except as a wash-house, for people at Olney do not eat and drink as they do in other places. I do not mean, my dear, that they quaff nectar or feed on ambrosia, but *tout au contraire*. So what must be done about this abominable kitchen? It is out of doors—that is not amiss. It has neither range nor jack—that is terrible. But then range and jack are not unattainables; they may be easily supplied. And if it were not—abominable kitchen—that it is, no bigger than half an egg-shell, shift might be made. The good woman is content that your servants should eat and drink in her parlour, but expects that they shall disperse themselves when they have done. But whither, who can say? unless into the arbour in the garden, for that they should solace themselves in said kitchen were hardly to be expected. While I write this, Mrs. U is gone to attempt a treaty with the linen-draper over the way, which, if she succeed, will be best of all, because the rooms are better, and it is just at hand. I must halt till she returns.—She returns,—

nothing done. She is gone again to another place. Once more I halt. Again she returns and opens the parlour door with these tidings — "I have succeeded beyond my utmost hopes. I went to Maurice Smith's, (he you must know, my dear, is a Jack-of-all-trades,) I said, do you know if Mr Brightman could and would let lodgings ready furnished to a lady with three servants? Maurice's wife calls out, (she is a Quaker,) Why dost thee not take the vicarage? I replied, There is no furniture 'Pshaw!' quoth Maurice's wife; 'we will furnish it for thee, and at the lowest rate — from a bed to a platter we will find all'" — And what do you intend now? said I to Mrs Unwin "Why now," quoth she, "I am going to the curate to hear what *he* says." So away she goes, and in about twenty minutes returns. — "Well, now it is all settled. Lady H is to have all the vicarage, except two rooms, at the rate of ten guineas a year, and Maurice will furnish it for five guineas from June to November, inclusive." So, my dear, you and your train are provided for to my heart's content. They ate Lady Austen's lodgings, only with more room, and at the same price. You have a parlour sixteen feet by fourteen, chamber ditto, a room for your own maid, near to your own, that I have occupied many a good time, an exceeding good garret for Cooke, and another ditto, at a convenient distance, for Samuel, a cellar, a good kitchen, the use of the garden, — in short, all that you can want. Give us our commission in your next, and all shall be ready by the first of June. You will observe, my beloved cousin, that it is not in all above eight shillings a week in the whole year, or but a trifle more. And the furniture is really smart, and the beds good. But you must find your own linen. *Com* then, my beloved cousin, for I am determined that, whatsoever king shall reign, you shall be *Vicar* of Olney. Come and cheer my heart. I have left many things unsaid, but shall note them another time. Adieu!

Ever yours, . W. C.

I am so charmed with the subject that concludes my letter that I grudge every inch of paper to any other. Yet must I allow myself space to say that Lord Dartmouth's behaviour to you at the concert has won my heart to him

more than ever. It was such a well-timed kindness to me, and so evidently performed with an equal design of giving pleasure to you, that I love him for it at my heart. I have never, indeed, at any time, had occasion to charge him, as I know that many have done, with want of warmth in his friendship.—I honour you, my dear, for your constellation of nobles. I rejoice that the contents of my box have pleased you may I never write any thing that does not! My friend Bull brought me to-day the last Gentleman's Magazine. There your cousin is held up again. Oh rare coz!

CCCL

DESCRIPTION OF THE VICARAGE—LETTER FROM
ANONYMOUS—STATE OF HIS EYES—THURLOW.

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, April 17, 1786.

If you will not quote Solomon, my dearest cousin, I will He says, and as beautiful as truly—"Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life!" I feel how much reason he had on his side when he made this observation, and am myself sick of your fortnight's delay

* * * * *

The vicarage was built by Lord Dartmouth, and was not finished till some time after we arrived at Olney, consequently it is new. It is a smart stone building, well sashed, by much too good for the living, but just what I would wish for you. It has, as you justly concluded from my premises, a garden, but rather calculated for use than ornament. It is square, and well walled, but has neither arbour nor alcove, nor other shade, except the shadow of the house. But we have two gardens, which are yours. Between your mansion and ours is interposed nothing but an orchard, into which a door opening out of our garden affords us the easiest communication imaginable, will save the round about by the town, and make both houses one. Your chamber-windows look over the river, and over the meadows, to a village called Emberton, and command the whole length of

a long bridge, described by a certain poet, together with a view of the road at a distance. Should you wish for books at Olney, you must bring them with you, or you will wish in vain, for I have none but the works of a certain poet, Cowper, of whom perhaps you have heard, and they are as yet but two volumes. They may multiply hereafter; but at present they are no more.

You are the first person for whom I have heard Mrs. Unwin express such feelings as she does for you. She is not profuse in professions, nor forward to enter into treaties of friendship with new faces, but when her friendship is once engaged, it may be confided in even unto death. She loves you already, and how much more will she love you before this time twelve months! I have indeed endeavoured to describe you to her, but perfectly as I have you by heart, I am sensible that my picture cannot do you justice. I never saw one that did. Be you what you may, you are much beloved, and will be so at Olney, and Mrs. U. expects you with the pleasure that one feels at the return of a long absent, dear relation, that is to say, with a pleasure such as mine. She sends you her warmest affections.

On Friday I received a letter from dear Anonymous, apprising me of a parcel that the coach would bring me on Saturday. Who is there in the world that has, or thinks he has, reason to love me to the degree that he does? But it is no matter. He chooses to be unknown, and his choice is, and ever shall be so sacred to me, that if his name lay on the table before me reversed, I would not turn the paper about that I might read it. Much as it would gratify me to thank him, I would turn my eyes away from the forbidden discovery. I long to assure him that those same eyes, concerning which he expresses such kind apprehensions, lest they should suffer by this laborious undertaking, are as well as I could expect them to be, if I were never to touch either book or pen. Subject to weakness, and occasional slight inflammation, it is probable that they will always be, but I cannot remember the time when they enjoyed any thing so like an exemption from those infirmities as at present. One would almost suppose that reading Homer were the best ophthalmic in the world. I should be

happy to remove his solicitude on the subject, but it is a pleasure that he will not let me enjoy. Well then, I will be content without it, and so content that, though I believe you, my dear, to be in full possession of all this mystery, you shall never know me, while you live, either directly, or by hints of any sort, attempt to extort, or to steal the secret from you. I should think myself as justly punishable as the Bethshemites, for looking into the ark, which they were not allowed to touch.

I have not sent for Kerr, for Kerr can do nothing but send me to Bath, and to Bath I cannot go for a thousand reasons. The summer will set me up again. I grow fat every day, and shall be as big as Gog or Magog, or both put together, before you come.

I did actually live three years with Mr Chapman, a solicitor, that is to say, I slept three years in his house but I lived, that is to say, I spent my days in Southampton Row, as you very well remember. There was I, and the future Lord Chancellor, constantly employed from morning to night in giggling and making giggle, instead of studying the law. O he, cousin! how could you do so? I am pleased with Lord Thurlow's enquiries about me. If he takes it into that imitable head of his, he may make a man of me yet. I could love him heartily, if he would but deserve it at my hands. That I did so once is certain. The Duchesses of——, who in the world set her a-going? But if all the duchesses in the world were spinning, like so many whirligigs, for my benefit, I would not stop them. It is a noble thing to be a poet, it makes all the world so lively. I might have preached more sermons than even Tillotson did, and better, and the world would have been still fast asleep, but a volume of verse is a fiddle that puts the universe in motion.

Yours, my dear friend and cousin,

W. C.

CCCLI.

HE LOVES TALKING LETTERS LIKE HERB—COW-
PERSHIP—A MORSEL OF PRAISE.

TO LADY HESKETH

Olney, April 24, 1786.

YOUR letters are so much my comfort, that I often tremble lest by any accident I should be disappointed, and the more because you have been, more than once, so engaged in company on the writing day, that I have had a narrow escape. Let me give you a piece of good counsel, my cousin, follow my laudable example—write when you can; take Time's forelock in one hand, and a pen in the other, and so make sure of your opportunity. It is well for me that you write faster than any body, and more in an hour than other people in two, else I know not what would become of me. When I read your letters I hear you talk, and I love talking letters dearly, especially from you. Well! the middle of June will not be always a thousand years off, and when it comes I shall hear you, and see you too, and shall not care a farthing then if you do not touch a pen in a month. By the way, you must either send me, or bring me some more paper, for before the moon shall have performed a few more revolutions I shall not have a scrap left,—and tedious revolutions they are just now, that is certain.

I give you leave to be as peremptory as you please, especially at a distance, but when you say that you are a Cowper, (and the better it is for the Cowpers that such you are, and I give them joy of you, with all my heart,) you must not forget that I boast myself a Cowper too, and have my humours, and fancies, and purposes, and determinations, as well as others of my name, and hold them as fast as they can. *You* indeed tell *me* how often I shall see you when you come! A pretty story truly. I am a *he* Cowper, my dear, and claim the privileges that belong to my noble sex. But these matters shall be settled as my cousin Agamemnon used to say, at a more convenient time.

I shall rejoice to see the letter you promise me, for though I met with a morsel of praise last week, I do not know that

the week current is likely to produce me any, and having lately been pretty much pampered with that diet, I expect to find myself rather hungry by the time when your next letter shall arrive. It will therefore be very opportune. The morsel, above alluded to, came from—whom do you think? From——, but she desires that her authorship may be a secret. And in my answer I promised not to divulge it except to you. It is a pretty copy of verses, neatly written, and well turned, and when you come you shall see them. I intend to keep all pretty things to myself till then, that they may serve me as a bait to lure you hither more effectually. The last letter that I had from——I received so many years since, that it seems as if it had reached me a good while before I was born.

I was grieved at the heart that the General could not come, and that illness was in part the cause that hindered him. I have sent him, by his express desire, a new edition of the first book, and half the second. He would not suffer me to send it to you, my dear, lest you should post it away to Maty at once. He did not give that reason, but being shrewd, I found it.

The grass begins to grow, and the leaves to bud, and every thing is preparing to be beautiful against you come.

Adieu! W C

You enquire of our walks, I perceive, as well as of our rides: they are beautiful. You enquire also concerning a cellar: you have two cellars. Oh! what years have passed since we took the same walks, and drank out of the same bottle! but a few more weeks and then!

CCCLII

MATY'S OPINION OF HIS SPECIMEN UNFAVOURABLE—COWPER VEXED—A HOUSE AT WESTON VACANT

TO LADY HESKETH

Olney, May 8, 1786

I DID not at all doubt that your tenderness for my feelings had inclined you to suppress in your letters to me the intelligence concerning Maty's critique, that yet reached me

from another quarter. When I wrote to you I had not learned it from the General, but from my friend Bull, who only knew it, by hearsay. The next post brought me the news of it from the first-mentioned, and the critique itself enclosed. Together with it came also a squib discharged against me in the Public Advertiser. The General's letter found me in one of my most melancholy moods, and my spirits did not rise on the receipt of it. The letter indeed that he had cut from the newspaper gave me little pain, both because it contained nothing formidable, though written with malevolence enough, and because a nameless author can have no more weight with his readers than the reason which he has on his side can give him. But Maty's animadversions hurt me more. In part they appeared to me unjust, and in part ill-natured, and yet the man himself being an oracle in every body's account, I apprehended that he had done me much mischief. Why he says that the translation is far from exact, is best known to himself.

For I know it to be as exact as is compatible with poetry, and prose translations of Homer are not wanted, the world has one already. But I will not fill my letter to you with hypercriticisms, I will only add an extract from a letter of Colman's, that I received last Friday, and will then dismiss the subject. It came accompanied by a copy of the specimen, which he himself had amended, and with so much taste and candour that it charmed me. He says as follows:

"One copy I have returned, with some remarks prompted by my zeal for your success, not, Heaven knows, by arrogance or impertinence. I know no other way at once so plain, and so short, of delivering my thoughts on the specimen of your translation, which on the whole I admire exceedingly, thinking it breathes the spirit, and conveys the manner of the original, though having here neither Homer nor Pope's Homer, I cannot speak precisely of particular lines or expressions, or compare your blank verse with his rhyme, except by declaring that I think blank verse infinitely more congenial to the magnificent simplicity of Homer's hexameters, than the confined couplets, and the jingle of rhyme"——

His amendments are chiefly bestowed on the lines encumbered with elisions, and I will just take this opportunity to tell you, my dear, because I know you to be as much interested in what I write as myself, that some of the most offensive of those elisions were occasioned by mere criticism. I was fairly hunted into them, by vexatious objections made without end by——, and his friend, and altered, and altered, till at last I did not care how I altered. Many thanks for——'s verses, which deserve just the character you give of them. They are neat and easy,—but I would mumble her well, if I could get at her, for allowing herself to suppose for a moment that I praised the Chancellor with a view to emolument. I wrote those stanzas merely for my own amusement, and they slept in a dark closet years after I composed them, not in the least designed for publication. But when Johnson had printed off the longer pieces, of which the first volume principally consists, he wrote me word that he wanted yet two thousand lines to swell it to a proper size. On that occasion it was that I collected every scrap of verse that I could find, and that among the rest. None of the smaller poems had been introduced, or had been published at all with my name, but for this necessity.

Just as I wrote the last word I was called down to Dr Kerr, who came to pay me a voluntary visit. Were I sick, his cheerful and friendly manner would almost restore me. Air and exercise are his theme, then he recommends as the best physic for me, and in all weathers. Come therefore, my dear, and take a little of this good physic with me, for you will find it beneficial as well as I. Come and assist Mrs Unwin in the reestablishment of your cousin's health. Air and exercise, and she and you together, will make me a perfect Samson. You will have a good house over your head, comfortable apartments, obliging neighbours, good roads, a pleasant country, and in us your constant companions, two, who will love you, and do already love you dearly, and with all our hearts. If you are in any danger of trouble, it is from myself, if my fits of dejection seize me, and as often as they do, you will be grieved for me, but perhaps by your assistance I shall be able to resist them better. If

there is a creature under heaven, from whose co-operations with Mrs Unwin I can reasonably expect such a blessing, that creature is yourself I was not without such attacks when I lived in London, though at that time they were less oppressive ; but in your company I was never unhappy a whole day in all my life

Of how much importance is an author to himself ! I return to that abominable specimen again, just to notice Maty's impatient censure of the repetition that you mention I mean of the word *hand* In the original there is not a repetition of it But to repeat a word in that manner, and on such an occasion, is by no means what he calls it, a *modern* invention In Homer I could show him many such, and in Virgil they abound Colman, who, in his judgment of classical matters, is inferior to none, says, "*I know not why Maty objects to this expression*" I could easily change it But the case standing thus, I know not whether my proud stomach will condescend so low I rather feel myself disinclined to it

One evening last week Mrs Unwin and I took our walk to Weston, and as we were returning through the grove opposite to the house, the Throckmortons presented themselves at the door They are owners of a house at Weston, at present empty It is a very good one, infinitely superior to ours When we drank chocolate with them, they both expressed their ardent desire that we would take it, wishing to have us for nearer neighbours If you, my cousin, were not so well provided for as you are, and at our very elbow, I verily believe I should have mustered up all my rhetoric to recommend it to you You might have it for ever without danger of ejection, whereas your possession of the vicarage depends on the life of the vicar, who is eighty-six The environs are most beautiful, and the village itself one of the prettiest I ever saw Add to this, you would step immediately into Mr Throckmorton's pleasure-ground, where you would not soil your slipper even in winter A most unfortunate mistake was made by that gentleman's bailiff in his absence Just before he left Weston last year for the winter, he gave him orders to cut short the tops of the flowering shrubs that lined a serpentine walk in a de

lightful grove, celebrated by my poetship in a little piece that you remember was called the Shrubbery. The dunce, misapprehending the order, cut down and faggoted up the whole grove, leaving neither tree, bush, nor twig,—nothing but stumps about as high as my ancle. Mrs Throckmorton told us that she never saw her husband so angry in her life. I judge indeed by his physiognomy, which has great sweetness in it, that he is very little addicted to that infernal passion. But had he cudgelled the man for his cruel blunder, and the havoc made in consequence of it, I could have excused him.

I felt myself really concerned for the Chancellor's illness, and from what I learned of it, both from the papers, and from General Cowper, concluded that he must die. I am accordingly delighted in the same proportion with the news of his recovery. May he live, and live to be still the support of Government! If it shall be his good pleasure to render me personally any material service, I have no objection to it. But Heaven knows, that it is impossible for any living wight to bestow less thought on that subject than myself.—May God be ever with you, my beloved cousin!

W C

CCCLIII

**ANTICIPATIONS OF THEIR MEETING—AVOWAL
OF AMBITION**

TO LADY HESKETH

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Olney, May 15, 1786

FROM this very morning I begin to date the last month of our long separation, and confidently and most comfortably hope that before the fifteenth of June shall present itself, we shall have seen each other. Is it not so? And will it not be one of the most extraordinary eras of my extraordinary life? A year ago, we neither corresponded, nor expected to meet in this world. But this world is a scene of marvellous events, many of them more marvellous than fiction itself would dare to hazard, and, blessed be God! they are not all of the distressing kind. Now and then in the course of an existence, whose hue is for the most part sable, a day

turns up that makes amends for many sighs, and many subjects of complaint. Such a day shall I account the day of your arrival at Olney.

Wherefore is it (canst thou tell me?) that together all those delightful sensations, to which the sight of a long absent dear friend gives birth, there is a mixture of something painful, flutterings, and tumults, and I know not what accompaniments of our pleasure, that are in fact perfectly foreign from the occasion? Such I feel when I think of our meeting, and such I suppose feel you, and the nearer the crisis approaches, the more I am sensible of them. I know beforehand that they will increase with every turn of the wheels that shall convey me to Newport, when I shall set out to meet you, and that when we actually meet, the pleasure, and this unaccountable pain together, will be as much as I shall be able to support. I am utterly at a loss for the cause, and can only resolve it into that appointment, by which it has been foreordained that all human delights shall be qualified and mingled with their contraries. For there is nothing formidable in you. To me at least there is nothing such, no, not even in your menaces, unless when you threaten me to write no more. Nay, I verily believe, did I not know you to be what you are, and had less affection for you than I have, I should have fewer of these emotions, of which I would have none, if I could help it. But a fig for them all! Let us resolve to combat with, and to conquer them. They are dreams, they are illusions of the judgment. Some enemy that hates the happiness of human kind, and is ever industrious to dash it, works them in us, and their being so perfectly unreasonable as they are is a proof of it. Nothing that is such can be the work of a good agent. This I know too by experience, that, like all other illusions, they exist only by force of imagination, are indebted for their prevalence to the absence of their object, and in a few moments after its appearance cease. So then this is a settled point, and the case stands thus. You will tremble as you draw near to Newport, and so shall I, but we will both recollect that there is no reason why we should, and this recollection will at least have some little effect in our favour. We will

likewise both take the comfort of what we know to be true, that the tumult will soon cease, and the pleasure long survive the pain, even as long I trust as we ourselves shall survive it

What you say of Maty gives me all the consolation that you intended. We both think it highly probable that you suggest the true cause of his displeasure, when you suppose him mortified at not having had a part of the translation laid before him, ere the specimen was published. The General was very much hurt, and calls his censure harsh and unreasonable. He likewise sent me a consolatory letter on the occasion, in which he took the kindest pains to heal the wound that he supposed I might have suffered. I am not naturally insensible, and the sensibilities that I had by nature have been wonderfully enhanced by a long series of shocks, given to a frame of nerves that was never very athletic. I feel accordingly, whether painful or pleasant in the extreme, am easily elevated, and easily cast down. The frown of a critic freezes my poetical powers, and discourages me to a degree that makes me ashamed of my own weakness. Yet I presently recover my confidence again. The half of what you so kindly say in your last would at any time restore my spirits, and, being said by you, is infallible. I am not ashamed to confess, that having commenced an author, I am most abundantly desirous to succeed as such. *I have, (what, perhaps, you little suspect me of,) in my nature an infinite share of ambition.* But with it I have at the same time, as you well know, an equal share of diffidence. To this combination of opposite qualities it has been owing that, till lately, I stole through life without undertaking anything, yet always wishing to distinguish myself. At last I ventured, ventured too in the only path that at so late a period was yet open to me, and am determined, if God have not determined otherwise, to work my way through the obscurity that has been so long my portion, into notice. Every thing therefore that seems to threaten this my favourite purpose with disappointment, affects me nearly. I suppose that all ambitious minds are in the same predicament. He who seeks distinction must be sensible of disapprobation, exactly in the same proportion as he desires applause. And now, my precious cousin, I have unfolded my heart to you

in this particular, without a speck of dissimulation. Some people, and good people too, would blame me but you will not, and they I think would blame without just cause. We certainly do not honour God when we bury, or when we neglect to improve, as far as we may, whatever talent he may have bestowed on us, whether it be little or much. In natural things, as well as in spiritual, it is a never-failing truth, that to him who *hath*, (that is, to him who occupies what he hath diligently, and so as to increase it,) more shall be given. Set me down therefore, my dear, for an industrious rhymester, so long as I shall have the ability. For in this only way is it possible for me, so far as I can see, either to honour God, or to serve man, or even to serve myself.

I rejoice to hear that Mr Throckmorton wishes to be on a more intimate footing. I am shy, and suspect that he is not very much otherwise, and the consequence has been that we have mutually wished an acquaintance without being able to accomplish it. Blessings on you for the hint that you dropped on the subject of the house at Weston! For the burthen of my song is,—“Since we have met once again, let us never be separated, as we have been, more.”

W C

CCCLIV

ON THE RENEWED INTERCOURSE WITH
HIS RELATIONS.

TO THE REV JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND,

May 20, 1796

Within this hour arrived three sets of your new publication, for which we sincerely thank you. We have breakfasted since they came, and consequently, as you may suppose, have neither of us had yet an opportunity to make ourselves acquainted with the contents. I shall be happy (and when I say that, I mean to be understood in the fullest and most emphatical sense of the word) if my frame of mind shall be such as may permit me to study them. But Adam's approach to the Tree of Life, after he had sinned, was not more effectually prohibited by the flaming sword that turned every way, than mine to its great Antetype has been now almost these thirteen years, a short interval of three or four days, which passed about this time twelve-month, alone excepted. For what reason it is that I am

thus long excluded, if I am ever again to be admitted. is known to God only. I can say but this. that if he is still my Father, his paternal severity has, toward me, been such as that I have reason to account it unexampled. For though others have suffered desertion, yet few, I believe, for so long a time, and perhaps none a desertion accompanied with such experiences. But they have this belonging to them that as they are not fit for recital, being made up merely of infernal ingredients, so neither are they susceptible of it, for I know no language in which they could be expressed. They are as truly things which it is not possible for man to utter, as those were which Paul heard and saw in the Third Heaven. If the ladder of Christian experience reaches, as I suppose it does, to the very presence of God, it has nevertheless its foot in the abyss. And if Paul stood, as no doubt he did, in that experience of his to which I have just alluded, on the topmost round of it, I have been standing, and still stand on the lowest, in this thirteenth year that has passed since I descended. In such a situation of mind, encompassed by the midnight of absolute despair, and a thousand times filled with unspeakable horror, I first commenced an author. Distress drove me to it, and the impossibility of subsisting without some employment, still recommends it. I am not, indeed, so perfectly hopeless as I was, but I am equally in need of an occupation, being often as much, and sometimes even more, worried than ever. I cannot amuse myself, as I once could, with carpenters' or with gardeners' tools, or with squirrels and guineapigs. At that time I was a child. But since it has pleased God, whatever else he withholds, to restore to me a man's mind, I have put away childish things. Thus far, therefore, it is plain that I have not chosen or prescribed to myself my own way, but have been providentially let to it, perhaps I might say, with equal propriety, compelled and scourged into it for certainly, could I have made my choice, or were I permitted to make it even now, those hours which I spend in poetry I would spend with God. But it is evidently his will that I should spend them as I do, because every other way of employing them he himself continues to make impossible. If, in the course of such an occupation, or by inevitable consequence

of it, either my former connexions are revived, or new ones occur, these things are as much a part of the dispensation as the leading points of it themselves, the effect, as much as the cause. If his purposes in thus directing me are gracious, he will take care to prove them such in the issue, and, in the meantime, will preserve me (for he is as able to do that in one condition of life as in another) from all mistakes in conduct that might prove pernicious to myself, or give reasonable offence to others. I can say it as truly as it was ever spoken,—Here I am—let him do with me as seemeth him good.

At present, however, I have no connexions at which either you, I trust, or any who love me and wish me well, have occasion to conceive alarm. Much kindness indeed I have experienced at the hands of several, some of them near relations, others not related to me at all, but I do not know that there is among them a single person from whom I am likely to catch contamination. I can say of them all, with more truth than Jacob uttered when he called kid venison, "The Lord thy God brought them unto me." I could show you among them two men, whose lives though they—but little of what we call evangelical light are ornaments to a Christian country, men who fear God more than some who even profess to love him. But I will not particularize farther on such a subject. Be they what they may, our situations are so distant and we are likely to meet so seldom, that were they, as they are not persons even of exceptionable manners, their manners would have little to do with me. We correspond, at present, only on the subject of what passed at Troy three thousand years ago, and they are matters that, if they can do no good, will at least hurt nobody.

Your friendship for me, and that the proof that I see of it in your friendly concern for my welfare on this occasion, demanded that I should be explicit. Assure yourself that I love and honour you as upon all accounts, so especially for the interest that you take, and have ever taken in my welfare, most sincerely. I wish you all happiness in your new abode, all possible success in your ministry and much fruit of your newly published labours, and am with Mrs. Darwin's love to yourself and Mrs. Newton,

Most affectionately yours, My dear friend,

W. C.

CCCLV

**GIVES UP THE INTENTION OF MEETING HER AT
NEWPORT PAGNELL-HOUSE AT WESTON-LINES
IN THE TASK TAKEN FOR YOUNG'S-HIS SPIRITS
-FRIENDSHIP FOR ETERNITY.**

TO LADY HESKETH

Olney, May 25, 1786

I HAVE at length, my cousin, found my way into my summer abode. I believe that I described it to you some time since, and will therefore now leave it undescribed. I will only say that I am writing in a handbox, situated, at least in my account, delightfully, because it has a window in one side that opens into that orchard, through which, as I am sitting here, I shall see you often pass, and which therefore I already prefer to all the orchards in the world. You do well to prepare me for all possible delays, because in this life all sorts of disappointments are possible, and I shall do well, if any such delay of your journey should happen, to practise that lesson of patience which you inculcate. But it is a lesson which, even with you for my teacher, I shall be slow to learn. Being sure however that you will not procrastinate without cause, I will make myself as easy as I can about it, and hope the best. To convince you how much I am under discipline and good advice, I will lay aside a favourite measure, influenced in doing so by nothing but the good sense of your contrary opinion. I had set my heart on meeting you at Newport. In my haste to see you once again, I was willing to overlook many awkwardnesses I could not but foresee would attend it. I put them aside so long as I only foresaw them myself, but since I find that you foresee them too, I can no longer deal so slightly with them. It is therefore determined that we meet at Olney. Much I shall feel, but I will not die if I can help it, and I beg that you will take all possible care to outlive it likewise, for I know what it is to be balked in the moment of acquisition, and should be loath to know it again.

Last Monday, in the evening, we walked to Weston, according to our usual custom. It happened, owing to a mistake of time, that we set out half an hour sooner than usual.

This mistake we discovered, while we were in the wilderness. So, finding that we had time before us, as they say, Mrs. Unwin proposed that we should go into the village, and take a view of the house that I had just mentioned to you. We did so, and found it such a one as in most respects would suit you well. But Moses Brown, our vicar, who, as I told you, is in his eighty-sixth year, is not bound to die for that reason. He said himself, when he was here last summer, that he should live ten years longer, and for aught that appears so he may, in which case, for the sake of its near neighbourhood to us, the vicarage has charms for me, that no other place can rival. But this, and a thousand things more, shall be talked over when you come.

We have been industriously cultivating our acquaintance with our Weston neighbours since I wrote last, and they on their part have been equally diligent in the same cause. I have a notion, that we shall all suit well. I see much in them both that I admire. You know perhaps that they are Catholics.

It is a delightful bundle of praise, my cousin, that you have sent me,—all jasmine and lavender. Whoever the lady is, she has evidently an admirable pen, and a cultivated mind. If a person reads, it is no matter in what language, and if the mind be informed, it is no matter whether that mind belongs to a man or a woman: the taste and the judgment will receive the benefit alike in both. Long before the *Fask* was published, I made an experiment one day, being in a frolicsome mood, upon my friend—we were walking in the garden, and conversing on a subject similar to these lines,—

The few that pray at all, pray oft amiss,
And seeking grace to, improve the present good,
Would urge a wiser suit than asking more.

I repeated them, and said to him with an air of *nonchalance*, “Do you recollect those lines? I have seen them somewhere, where are they?” He put on a considering face, and after some deliberation replied,—“O, I will tell you where they must be,—in the *Night Thoughts*.” I was glad my trial turned out so well, and did not deceive him. I mention this occurrence only in confirmation of

the letter-writer's opinion, but at the same time I do assure you, on the faith of an honest man, that I never in my life designed an imitation of Young, or of any other writer; for mimicry is my abhorrence,—at least in poetry

Assure yourself, my dearest cousin, that both for your sake, since you make a point of it, and for my own, I will be as philosophically careful as possible that these fine nerves of mine shall not be beyond measure agitated when you arrive. In truth, there is much greater probability that they will be benefited, and greatly too. Joy of heart, from whatever occasion it may arise, is the best of all nervous medicines, and I should not wonder if such a turn given to my spirits should have even a lasting effect, of the most advantageous kind, upon them. You must not imagine neither, that I am on the whole in any great degree subject to nervous affections. Occasionally I am, and have been these many years, much liable to dejection, but at intervals, and sometimes for an interval of weeks, no creature would suspect it. For I have not that which commonly is a symptom of such a case belonging to me; — I mean extraordinary elevation in the absence of Mr. Bluedevil. When I am in the best health, my tide of animal sprightliness flows with great equality, so that I am never, at any time, exalted in proportion as I am sometimes depressed. My depression has a cause, and if that cause were to cease, I should be as cheerful thenceforth, and perhaps for ever, as any man need be. But, as I have often said, Mrs. Unwin shall be my expositor.

Adieu, my beloved cousin! God grant that our friendship which, while we could see each other, never suffered a moment's interruption, and which so long a separation has not in the least abated, may glow in us to our last hour, and be renewed in a better world, there to be perpetuated for ever!

For you must know that I should not love you half so well, if I did not believe you would be my friend to eternity. There is not room enough for friendship to unfold itself in full bloom, in such a nook of life as this. Therefore I am, and must, and will be,
Yours for ever, W. C.

CCCVI.

SPRING PASSING AWAY—HIS WORKSHOP—EXPECTATION OF BENEFIT FROM HER COMING.

TO LADY HESKETH.

Olney, May 29, 1786.

THOU dear, comfortable cousin, whose letters, among all that I receive, have this property peculiarly their own, that I expect them without trembling, and never find any thing in them that does not give me pleasure, for which therefore I would take nothing in exchange that the world could give me, save and except that for which I must exchange them soon, (and happy shall I be to do so,) your own company. That, indeed, is delayed a little too long; to my impatience at least it seems so, who find the spring, backward as it is, too forward, because many of its beauties will have faded before you will have an opportunity to see them. We took our customary walk yesterday in the wilderness at Weston, and saw, with regret, the laburnums, syringas, and guelder-roses, some of them blown, and others just upon the point of blowing, and could not help observing—all these will be gone before Lady Hesketh comes! Still however there will be roses, and jasmine, and honeysuckle, and shady walks, and cool alcoves, and you will partake them with us. But I want you to have a share of every thing that is delightful here, and cannot bear that the advance of the season should steal away a single pleasure before you can come to enjoy it.

Every day I think of you, and almost all the day long; I will venture to say, that even *you* were never so expected in your life. I called last week at the Quaker's to see the furniture of your bed, the fame of which had reached me. It is, I assure you, superb, of printed cotton, and the subject classical. Every morning you will open your eyes on Phaeton kneeling to Apollo, and imploring his father to grant him the conduct of his chariot for a day. May your sleep be as sound as your bed will be sumptuous, and your nights at least will be well provided for.

I shall send up the sixth and seventh books of the *Iliad* shortly, and shall address them to you. You will forward them to the General. I long to show you my workshop,

and to see you sitting on the opposite side of my table ~~We shall be as close packed as two wax figures in an old fashioned picture frame~~ I am writing in it now It is the place in which I fabricate all my verse in summer time I rose an hour sooner than usual this morning, that I might finish my sheet before breakfast, for I must write this day to the General.

The grass under my windows is all bespangled with dew-drops, and the birds are singing in the apple trees, among the blossoms Never poet had a more commodious oratory in which to invoke his Muse

I have made your heart ache too often, my poor dear cousin, with talking about my fits of dejection Something has happened that has led me to the subject, or I would have mentioned them more sparingly Do not suppose, or suspect that I treat you with reserve, there is nothing in which I am concerned that you shall not be made acquainted with But the tale is too long for a letter I will only add, for your present satisfaction, that the cause is not exterior, that it is not within the reach of human aid, and that yet I have a hope myself, and Mrs. Unwin a strong persuasion of its removal I am indeed even now, and have been for a considerable time, sensible of a change for the better, and expect, with good reason, a comfortable lift from you Guess then, my beloved cousin, with what wishes I look forward to the time of your arrival, from whose coming I promise myself not only pleasure but peace of mind,—at least an additional share of it At present it is an uncertain and transient guest with me, but the joy with which I shall see and converse with you at Olney, may perhaps make it an abiding one W C

CCCLVII

**FORMER DAYS--DELAY OF HER COACHMAKER--
VISIT TO THE THROOKMORTONS.**

TO LADY HESKETH

Olney, June 4 and 5, 1786

Ah! my cousin, you begin already to fear and quake. What a hero am I, compared with you! I have no fears of

you, on the contrary am as bold as a lion I wish that your carriage were even now at the door. You should soon see with how much courage I would face you. But what cause have you for fear? Am I not your cousin, with whom you have wandered in the fields of Freemantle, and at Bevis's Mount? who used to read to you, laugh with you, till our sides have ached, at any thing, or nothing? And am I in these respects at all altered? You will not find me so but just as ready to laugh, and to wander, as you ever knew me. A cloud perhaps may come over me now and then, for a few hours, but from clouds I was never exempted. And are not you the identical cousin with whom I have performed all these feats? The very Harriet whom I saw, for the first time, at De Grey's in Norfolk Street? (It was on a Sunday, when you came with my uncle and aunt to drink tea there, and I had dined there, and was just going back to Westminster) If these things are so, and I am sure that you cannot gainsay a syllable of them all, then this consequence follows, and I do not promise myself more pleasure from your company than I shall be sure to find. Then you are my cousin, in whom I always delighted and in whom I doubt not that I shall delight even to my latest hour. But this wicked coach-maker has sunk my spirits. What a miserable thing it is to depend, in any degree, for the accomplishment of a wish, and that wish so fervent, on the punctuality of a creature who I suppose was never punctual in his life! Do tell him, my dear, in order to quicken him, that if he performs his promise, he shall make my coach when I want one, and that if he performs it not, I will most assuredly employ some other man.

The Throckmortons sent a note to invite us to dinner we went, and a very agreeable day we had. They made no fuss with us, which I was heartily glad to see, for where, I give trouble I am sure that I cannot be welcome. Themselves, and their chaplain, and we, were all the party. After dinner we had much cheerful and pleasant talk, the particulars of which might not perhaps be so entertaining upon paper, therefore all but one I will omit, and that I will mention only because it will of itself be sufficient to give you an insight into their opinion on a very important

subject—their own religion I happened to say that in all professions and trades mankind affected an air of mystery. Physicians, I observed, in particular, were objects of that remark, who persist in prescribing in Latin, many times no doubt to the hazard of a patient's life, through the ignorance of an apothecary Mr Throckmorton assented to what I said, and turning to his chaplain, to my infinite surprise observed to him, "*That is just as absurd as our praying in Latin*" I could have hugged him for his liberality, and freedom from bigotry, but thought it rather more decent to let the matter pass without any visible notice I therefore heard it with pleasure, and kept my pleasure, to myself The two ladies in the mean time were tête à tête in the drawing room The conversation turned principally (as I afterwards learned from Mrs Unwin) on a most delightful topic, viz myself. In the first place, Mrs Throckmorton admired my book, from which she quoted by heart more than I could repeat, though I so lately wrote it

In short, my dear, I cannot proceed to relate what she said of the book, and the book's author, for that abominable modesty that I cannot even yet get rid of I let it suffice to say that you, who are disposed to love every body who speaks kindly of your cousin, will certainly love Mrs Throckmorton, when you shall be told what she said of him, and that you *will* be told is equally certain, because it depends on Mrs Unwin, who will tell you many a good long story for me, that I am not able to tell for myself I am however not at all in arrear to our neighbours in the matter of admiration and esteem, but the more I know them, the more I like them, and have nearly an affection for them both. I am delighted that the task has so large a share of the approbation of your sensible Suffolk friend

I received yesterday from the General another letter of T S An unknown auxiliary having started up in my behalf, I believe I shall leave the business of answering to him, having no leisure myself for controversy. He lies very open to a very effectual reply

. My dearest cousin, adieu! I hope to write to you but

once more before we meet But oh ! this coachmaker, and
oh ! this holiday week !

Yours, with impatient desire to see you, W. C.

CCCLVIII.

**THURLOW'S ILLNESS—RENEWED INTERCOURSE
WITH COLMAN—THE NONSENSE CLUB.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Olney, June 9, 1786.

THE little time that I can devote to any other purpose than that of poetry is as you may suppose stolen Homer is urgent Much is done, but much remains undone, and no school-boy is more attentive to the performance of his daily task than I am You will therefore excuse me if at present I am both unfrequent and short

The paper tells me that the Chancellor has relapsed, and I am truly sorry to hear it The first attack was dangerous, but a second must be more formidable still It is not probable that I should ever hear from him again if he survive, yet of the much that I should have felt for him, had our connexion never been interrupted, I still feel much. Every body will feel the loss of a man whose abilities have made him of such general importance.

I correspond again with Colman, and upon the most friendly footing, and find in his instance, and in some others, that an intimate intercourse, which has been only casually suspended, not forfeited on either side by outrage, is capable not only of revival, but improvement

I had a letter some time since from your sister Fanny, that gave me great pleasure Such notices from old friends are always pleasant, and of such pleasures I have received many lately They refresh the remembrance of early days, and make me young again The noble institution of the Nonsense Club will be forgotten, when we are gone who composed it, but I often think of your most heroic line, written at one of our meetings, and especially think of it when I am translating Homer,—

“To whom replied the Devil yard-long tailed”

There never was any thing more truly Grecian than that triple epithet, and were it possible to introduce it into either Iliad or Odyssey, I should certainly steal it. I am now flushed with expectation of Lady Hesketh, who spends the summer with us. We hope to see her next week. We have found admirable lodgings both for her and her suite, and a Quaker in this town, still more admirable than they, who, as if he loved her as much as I do, furnishes them for her with real elegance

W C

CCCLIX

**DELAY AND IMPATIENCE—ARRANGEMENTS
FOR HER ARRIVAL**

TO LADY HESKETH

June 12 1786

I AM neither young nor superannuated, yet am I child. When I had read your letter I grumbled not at you, my dearest cousin, for you are in no fault, but at the whole generation of coach makers, as you may suppose, and at yours in particular. I foresaw and foreknew that he would fail in his promise, and yet was disappointed, was, in truth, no more prepared for what I expected with so much reason, than if I had not at all expected it. I grumbled till we went to dinner, and at intervals till we had dined, and when dinner was over, with very little encouragement, I could actually have cried. And if I had, I should in truth have thought them tears as well bestowed as most that I have shed for many years. At first I numbered months, then weeks, then days, and was just beginning to number hours, and now I am thrown back to days again. My last speech was, after folding up your letter, (for I will honestly tell you all,) I am crized with Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays and St Alban's, and Potteridge, and Hadley. When is she to set out?—When is she to be here? Do tell me, for, perhaps, you understand it better than I. Why says Mrs Unwin, (with much more composure in her air than properly belonged to her, for she also had her feelings on the occasion,) she sets out to-morrow se'nnight, and will be here on the Wednesday after. And who knows that?

replied I ; will the coach-maker be at all more punctual in repairing the old carriage, than in making the new one ? For my part, I have no hope of seeing her this month , and if it be possible, I will not think of it, lest I should be again disappointed. And to say the truth, my dear, though hours have passed since thus I said, and I have had time for cooler consideration, the suspicion still sticks close to me, that more delays may happen. A philosopher would prepare himself for such an event, but I am no philosopher, at least when the comfort of seeing you is in question. I believe in my heart that there have been just as many true philosophers upon earth, as there have been men that have had little or no feeling, and not one more. Swift truly says—

Indifference clad in reason's guise,
- All want of fortitude supplies.

When I wake in the night, I feel my spirits the lighter because you are coming. When I am not at Troy, I am either occupied in the recollection of a thousand passages of my past life, in which you were a partaker with me, or conversing about you with Mrs. Unwin. Thus my days and nights have been spent principally ever since you determined upon this journey, and especially, and almost without interruption from any other subject, since the time of your journey has seemed near at hand. While I despaired, as I did for many years, that I should ever see you more, I thought of you, indeed, and often, but with less solicitude. I used to say to myself, Providence has so ordered it, and it is my duty to submit. He has cast me at a distance from her, and from all whom I once knew. He did it, and not I, it is He who has chosen my situation for me. Have I not reason to be thankful that, since he designed me to pass a part of my life, and no inconsiderable one neither, in a state of the deepest melancholy, he appointed me a friend in Mrs. Unwin, who should share all my sorrows with me, and watch over me in my helpless condition, night and day ? What, and where had I been without her ? Such considerations were sufficient to reconcile me at that time to perpetual separation even from you, because perpetual I supposed it must be, and without re-

medy. But now every hour of your absence seems long, for this very natural reason, because the same Providence has given me a hope that you will be present with me soon. A good that seems at an immeasurable distance, and that we cannot hope to reach, has therefore the less influence on our affections. But the same good brought nearer, made to appear practicable, promised to our hopes, and almost in possession, engages all our faculties and desires. All this is according to the natural and necessary course of things in the human heart, and the philosophy that would interfere with it, is folly at least, if not frenzy. A throne has at present but little sensible attraction for me. And why? Perhaps only because I know that should I break my heart with wishes for a throne, I should never reach one. But did I know assuredly that I should put on a crown to-morrow, perhaps I too should feel ambition, and account the interposing night tedious. The sum of the whole matter my dear, is this: that this villainous coach maker has mortified me monstrously, and that I tremble lest he should do so again. From you I have no fears. I see in your letter, and all the way through it, what pains you take to assure me and give me comfort. I am and will be comforted for that very reason, and will wait still other ten days with all the patience that I can muster. You, I know, will be punctual if you can, and that at least is matter of real consolation.

I approve altogether, my cousin beloved, of your sending your goods to the waggon on Saturday, and cookee by the coach on Tuesday. She will be here perhaps by four in the afternoon, at the latest by five, and will have quite time enough to find out all the cupboards and shelves in her department before you arrive. But I declare and protest that cookee shall sleep that night at our house, and get her breakfast here next morning. You will break her heart, child, if you send her into a strange house where she will find nothing that has life but the curate, who has not much neither. Servant he keeps none. A woman makes his bed, and after a fashion as they say, dresses his dinner, and then leaves him to his incubrations. I do therefore insist on it, and so does Mrs. Unwin, that cookee shall be our guest for that time, and from this we will not depart.

I tell thee besides, that I shall be more glad to see her, than ever I was in my life to see one whom I never saw before. Guess why, if you can.

You must number your miles fifty-six instead of fifty-four. The fifty-sixth mile ends but a few yards beyond the vicarage. Soon after you shall have entered Olney, you will find an opening on your right hand. It is a lane that leads to your dwelling. There your coach may stop and set down Mrs. Eaton, when she has walked about forty yards she will spy a green gate and rails on her left hand, and when she has opened the gate and reached the house-door, she will find herself at home. But we have another manœuvre to play off upon you, and in which we positively will not be opposed, or if we are, it shall be to no purpose. I have an honest fellow that works in my garden, his name is Kitchener, and we call him Kitch for brevity. He is sober, and as trusty as the day. He has a smart blue coat, that when I had worn it some years, I gave him, and he has now worn it some years himself. I shall set him on horseback, and order him to the Swan at Newport, there to wait your arrival, and if you should not stop at that place, as perhaps you may not, immediately to throw himself into your suite, and to officiate as your guide. For though the way from Newport hither is short, there are turnings that might puzzle your coachman, and he will be of use too, in conducting you to our house, which otherwise you might not easily find, partly through the stupidity of those of whom you might inquire, and partly from its out-of-the-way situation. My brother drove up and down Olney in quest of us, almost as often as you up and down Chancery Lane in quest of the Madans, with fifty boys and girls at his tail, before he could find us. The first man, therefore, you shall see in a blue coat with white buttons, in the famous town of Newport, cry Kitch ! He will immediately answer, My Lady ! and from that moment you are sure not to be lost.

Your house shall be as clean as scrubbing and dry-rubbing can make it, and in all respects fit to receive you. My friend the Quaker, in all that I have seen of his doings,

has acquitted himself much to my satisfaction. Some little things, he says, will perhaps be missing at first, in such a multiplicity, but they shall be produced as soon as called for. Mrs U has bought you six ducks, and is fattening them for you. She has also rummaged up a coop that will hold six chickens, and designs to people it for you by the first opportunity, for these things are not to be got fit for the table at Olney. Thus, my dear, are all things in the best train possible, and nothing remains but that you come and show yourself. Oh, that moment! Shall we not both enjoy it?—That we shall.

I have received an anonymous complimentary Pindaric Ode from a little poet who calls himself a school-boy. I send you the first stanza by way of specimen. You shall see it all soon.

TO WM. COWPER, OF THE INNER TEMPLE, ESQ.

ON HIS POEMS IN THE SECOND VOLUME

In what high strains, my Muse, wilt thou
Attempt great Cowper's worth to show?

Pindaric strains ~~thy~~ tune the lyre, shall
And 'twould require

A Pindar's fire

To sing great Cowper's worth,
Thou lofty bard, delightful sage,
Ever the wonder of the age,
And blessing to the earth

Adieu, my precious cousin, your lofty bard and delightful sage expects you with all possible affection.

Ever yours, WM. COWPER

I am truly sorry for your poor friend Burrows!

Our dinner hour is four o'clock. We will not surfeit you with delicacies, of that be assured. I know your palate, and am glad to know that it is easily pleased. Were it other than it is, it would stand but a poor chance to be gratified at Olney. I undertake for lettuce and cucumber, and Mrs U for all the rest. If she feeds you too well, you must humble her.

CCCLX
**ANNOUNCING THEIR INTENDED REMOVAL
 TO WESTON.**

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

Olney, June 19, 1786.

My dear cousin's arrival has, as it could not fail to do, made us happier than we ever were at Olney Her great kindness in giving us her company is a cordial that I shall feel the effect of, not only while she is here, but while I live

Olney will not be much longer the place of our habitation At a village two miles distant we have hired a house of Mr Throckmorton, a much better than we occupy at present, and yet not more expensive It is situated very near to our most agreeable landlord, and his agreeable pleasure grounds In him, and in his wife, we shall find such companions as will always make the time pass pleasantly while they are in the country, and his grounds will afford us good air, and good walking room in the winter, two advantages which we have not enjoyed at Olney, where I have no neighbour with whom I can converse, and where, seven months in the year, I have been imprisoned by dirty and impassable ways, till both my health and Mrs Unwin's have suffered materially

Homer is ever importunate, and will not suffer me to spend half the time with my distant friends that I would gladly give them

W C

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 CCCCLXI
**LADY HESKETH'S ARRIVAL—ADVANTAGE OF
 THE INTENDED REMOVAL.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, July 3, 1786

AFTER a long silence I begin again. A day given to my friends, is a day taken from Homer, but to such an interruption now and then occurring, I have no objection Lady Hesketh is, as you observe, arrived, and has been with us near a fortnight. She pleases every body, and is pleased

in her turn with every thing she finds at Olney, is always cheerful and sweet-tempered, and knows no pleasure equal to that of communicating pleasure to us, and to all around her. This disposition in her is the more comfortable, because it is not the humour of the day, a sudden flash of benevolence and good spirits, occasioned merely by a change of scene, but it is her natural turn, and has governed all her conduct ever since I knew her first. We are consequently happy in her society, and shall be happier still to have you to partake with us in our joy. I can now assure you that her complexion is not at all indebted to art, having seen a hundred times the most convincing proof of its authenticity, her colour fading, and glowing again alternately as the weather, or her own temperature has happened to affect it, while she has been sitting before me. I am fond of the sound of the bells, but was never more pleased with those of Olney than when they rang her into her new habitation. It is a compliment that our performers upon those instruments have never paid to any other personage (Lord Dartmouth excepted) since we knew the town. In short, she is, as she ever was, my pride and my joy, and I am delighted with every thing that means to do her honour. Her first appearance was too much for me, my spirits, instead of being greatly raised, as I had inadvertently supposed they would be, broke down with me under the pressure of too much joy, and left me flit, or rather melancholy throughout the day, to a degree that was mortifying to myself, and alarming to her. But I have made amends for this failure since, and in point of cheerfulness have far exceeded her expectations, for she knew that sabbath had been my suit for my years.

And now I shall communicate intelligence that will give you pleasure. When you first contemplated the front of our abode, you were shocked. In your eyes it had the appearance of a prison, and you sighed at the thought that your mother dwelt in it. Your view of it was not only just, but prophetic. It had not only the aspect of a place built for the purpose of incarceration, but has actually served that purpose through a long, long period, and we have been the prisoners. But a gaol-delivery is at hand. The

bolts and bars are to be loosed, and we shall escape. A very different mansion, both in point of appearance and accommodation, expects us, and the expense of living in it not greater than we are subjected to in this. It is situated at Weston, one of the prettiest villages in England, and belongs to Mr Throckmorton. We all three dine with him to-day by invitation, and shall survey it in the afternoon, point out the necessary repairs, and finally adjust the treaty I have my cousin's promise that she will never let another year pass without a visit to us, and the house is large enough to contain us, and our suite, and her also, with as many of hers as she shall choose to bring. The change will I hope prove advantageous both to your mother and me in all respects. Here we have no neighbourhood, there we shall have most agreeable neighbours, in the Throckmortons. Here we have a bad air in winter, impregnated with the fishy smelling fumes of the marsh miasma, there we shall breathe in an atmosphere untainted. Here we are confined from September to March, and sometimes longer, there we shall be upon the very verge of pleasure-grounds in which we can always ramble, and shall not wade through almost impassable dirt to get at them. Both your mother's constitution and mine have suffered materially by such close and long confinement, and it is high time, unless we intend to retreat into the grave, that we should seek out a more wholesome residence. A pretty deal of new furniture will be wanted, especially chairs and beds, all which my kind cousin will provide, and fit up a parlour and a chamber for herself into the bargain. So far is well, the rest is left to Heaven.

I have hardly left myself room for an answer to your queries concerning my friend John, and his studies. What the supplement of *Hirtius* is made of, I know not. We did not read it at Westminster. I should imagine it might be dispensed with. I should recommend the civil war of Cæsar, because he wrote it, who ranks I believe as the best writer, as well as soldier, of his day. There are books (I know not what they are,, but you do, and can easily find them) that will inform him clearly of both the civil and military management of the Romans, the several officers, I

mean, in both departments, and what was the peculiar province of each. The study of some such book would I should think prove a good introduction to that of Livy, unless you have a Livy with notes to that effect. A want of intelligence in those points has heretofore made the Roman history very dark and difficult to me, therefore I thus advise.

• Our love is with all your lovelies, both great and small
Yours ever, W. G.

CCCLXII

FUSELI—HOMER—DENNIS

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

Olney, July 4, 1786

I REJOICE, my dear friend, that you have at last received my proposals, and most cordially thank you for all your labours in my service. I have friends in the world who, knowing that I am apt to be careless when left to myself, are determined to watch over me with a jealous eye upon this occasion. The consequence will be, that the work will be better executed, but more tardy in the production. To them I owe it, that my translation, as fast as it proceeds, passes under a revisal of the most accurate discerners of all blemishes. I know not whether I told you before, or now tell you for the first time, that I am in the hands of a very extraordinary person. He is intimate with my bookseller, and voluntarily offered his service. I was at first doubtful, whether to accept it or not, but finding that my friends abovesaid were not to be satisfied on any other terms, though myself a perfect stranger to the man and his qualifications, except as he was recommended by Johnson, I at length consented, and have since found great reason to rejoice that I did. I called him an extraordinary person, and such he is, for he is not only versed in Homer, and accurate in his knowledge of the Greek to a degree that entitles him to that appellation, but, though a foreigner, is a perfect master of our language, and has exquisite taste in English poetry. By his assistance I have improved many passages, supplied many oversights, and corrected many

mistakes, such as will of course escape the most diligent and attentive labourer in such a work I ought to add, because it affords the best assurance of his zeal and fidelity, that he does not toil for hire, nor will accept of any premium, but has entered on this business merely for his amusement. In the last instance my sheets will pass through the hands of our old schoolfellow Colman, who has engaged to correct the press, and make any little alterations that he may see expedient. With all this precaution, little as I intended it once, I am now well satisfied. Experience has convinced me that other eyes than my own are necessary, in order that so long and arduous a task may be finished as it ought, and may neither discredit me, nor mortify and disappoint my friends. You, who I know interest yourself much and deeply in my success, will I dare say be satisfied with it too. Pope had many aids, and he who follows Pope ought not to walk alone.

Though I announce myself by my very undertaking to be one of Homer's most enraptured admirers, I am not a blind one. Perhaps the speech of Achilles given in my specimen is, as you hint, rather too much in the moralizing strain, to suit so young a man, and of so much fire. But whether it be or not, in the course of the close application that I am forced to give to my author, I discover inadvertencies not a few, some perhaps that have escaped even the commentators themselves, or perhaps, in the enthusiasm of their idolatry, they resolved that they should pass for beauties. Homer however, say what they will, was man, and in all the works of man, especially in a work of such length and variety many things will of necessity occur, that might have been better. Pope and Addison had a Dennis, and Dennis, if I mistake not, held up as he has been to scorn and detestation, was a sensible fellow, and passed some censures upon both those writers that, had they been less just, would have hurt them less. Homer had his Zoilus, and perhaps if we knew all that Zoilus said, we should be forced to acknowledge that sometimes at least he had reason on his side. But it is dangerous to find any fault at all with what the world is determined to esteem faultless.

I rejoice, my dear friend, that you enjoy some composure, and cheerfulness of spirits may God preserve and increase to you so great a blessing !

I am affectionately and truly yours, W C

CCCLXIII

**THE PUPIL—DILIGENCE IN CORRECTING HIS
TRANSLATION THE THROCKMORTONS'
KINDNESS.**

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

August 24, 1786

I CATCH a minute by the tail and hold it fast, while I write to you. The moment it is fled I must go to breakfast. The post that brought me your speculations on the subject of your future pupil, conveyed to you I suppose Lady Hesketh's letter on the same subject, which has no doubt given you satisfaction. I saw Mr. Hornby's letter, than which nothing could be more handsome. His sole remark on the matter of stipend is this, that in placing the young gentleman under the influence of such excellent tuition, he confers on him a greater advantage than he could secure to him by any other means. You see, therefore, that he is a wise man, knows how to value the opportunity, and that erudition, &c. are better than house and land, for that.

When house and land are gone and spent,
Then learning is most excellent

I wish you all possible success with him, and that the Muses nine, with Apollo at their head, may brighten his intellects, and make him readily susceptible of all that you shall endeavour to infuse.

I am still occupied in refining and polishing, and shall this morning give the finishing hand to the seventh book. Fuseli does me the honour to say that the most difficult, and most interesting parts of the poem, are admirably rendered. But because he did not express himself equally pleased with the more pedestrian parts of it, my labour therefore has been principally given to the dignification of them, not

but that I have retouched considerably, and made better still the best. In short I hope to make it all of a piece, and shall exert myself to the utmost to secure that desirable point. A storyteller, so very circumstantial as Homer, must of necessity present us often with much matter in itself capable of no other embellishment than purity of diction and harmony of versification can give to it. *Hic labor, hoc opus est*. For our language, unless it be very severely chastised, has not the terseness, nor our measure the music of the Greek. But I shall not fail through want of industry.

We are likely to be very happy in our connexion with the Throckmortons. His reserve and mine wear off, and he talks with great pleasure of the comfort that he proposes to himself from our winter-evening conversations. His purpose seems to be, that we should spend them alternately with each other. Lady Hesketh transcribes for me at present. When she is gone, Mrs. Throckmorton takes up that business, and will be my lady of the ink-bottle for the rest of the winter. She solicited herself that office.

I will subjoin the measure of my hat. Let the new one be furnished *à la mode*.

Believe me, My dear William, truly yours, W C

Mr. Throckmorton will, I doubt not, procure Lord Petre's name, if he can, without any hint from me. He could not interest himself more in my success than he seems to do. Could he get the Pope to subscribe, I should have him, and should be glad of him and the whole conclave.

The outside circumference of the hat crown is two feet one inch and an eighth.

CCCLXIV

PLEASANT RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS SCHOOL-BOY DAYS AT WESTMINSTER.

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

You are my mahogany box, with a slip in the lid of it, to which I commit my productions of the lyric kind, in perfect

confidence that they are safe and will go no farther All who are attached to the jingling art have this peculiarity, that they would find no pleasure in the exercise, had they not one friend at least to whom they might publish what they have composed If you approve my Latin, and your wife and sister my English, this, together with the approbation of your mother, is fame enough for me

He who cannot look forward with comfort, must find what comfort he can in looking backward Upon this principle, I the other day sent my imagination upon a trip thirty years behind me She was very obedient, and very swift of foot, presently performed her journey, and at last set me down in the sixth form at Westminster I fancied myself once more a schoolboy, a period of life in which, if I had never tasted true happiness, I was at least equally unacquainted with its contrary No manufacturer of waking dreams ever succeeded better in his employment than I do I can weave such a piece of tapestry in a few minutes, as not only has all the charms of reality, but is embellished also with a variety of beauties which, though they never existed, are more captivating than any that ever did accordingly I was a schoolboy in high favour with my master, received a silver groat for my exercise, and had the pleasure of seeing it sent from form to form, for the admiration of all who were able to understand it Do you wish to see this highly applauded performance? It follows on the other side

[Torn off]

CCCLXV

MELANCHOLY IN HIS MIRTH—THELYPHTHORA— UNWIN'S CHARITY—LINES TO A LADY ON HER BIRTHDAY

TO THE REV WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

You are sometimes indebted to bad weather, but more frequently to a dejected state of mind, for my punctuality as a correspondent This was the case when I composed

that tragi-comical ditty for which you thank me - my spirits were exceedingly low, and having no fool or jester at hand, I resolved to be my own. The end was answered, I laughed myself, and I made you laugh. Sometimes I pour out my thoughts in a mournful strain, but these sable effusions your mother will not suffer me to send you, being resolved that nobody shall share with me the burthen of my melancholy but herself. In general you may suppose that I am remarkably sad when I seem remarkably merry. The effort we make to get rid of a load is usually violent in proportion to the weight of it. I have seen at Sadler's Wells a tight little fellow dancing with a fat man upon his shoulders, to those who looked at him, he seemed insensible of the encumbrance, but if a physician had felt his pulse, when the feat was over, I suppose he would have found the effect of it there. Perhaps you remember the Undertakers' dance in the Rehearsal, which they perform in crape hat bands and black cloaks, to the tune of "Hob or Noh," one of the sprightliest airs in the world. Such is my fiddling, and such is my dancing, but they serve a purpose which at some certain times could not be so effectually promoted by any thing else.

I am informed that Thelyphthora is at last encountered by a writer of abilities equal to the task. An answer to that base-born book was a grand desideratum in the world of literature. I call it so because it is the spurious issue of Scripture violated by misinterpretation. The mother is ashamed of the brat, and disowns it in every page, but the father, (a father is sometimes proud of his bastard,) dandles it upon his knee, and holds it up to the admiration of all beholders. This champion for the rights and honours of single marriage comes forth in the Monthly Review: I have not yet seen the first specimen of his performance, which belongs to October, but have ordered it down from London. The character I have received of it has pleased me much, and if I find it answer upon the perusal, I shall connect the detached parts of it, (for it is to be a work of some continuance,) and bind them up together. It is high time this false light should be extinguished: it has alarmed many families, misled many readers, and confirmed not a few in practices which their own consciences condemned,

till that Siren song deceived them — You will think perhaps I talk big for one that has never read it but I am acquainted with the principal hinges on which the whole depends, and am persuaded that one flash of truth would melt them. Mr. Riland of Birmingham sent into this country a string of twenty-seven printed queries, unanswerable he thinks, unless in such a way as must unavoidably induce a necessity of adopting Mr. Madin's plan. But being persuaded that even I was a match for such an enemy, I ventured upon the formidable task, and gave them twenty-seven answers. Indeed a child might have done the same, and I wonder less at the author's predilection in favour of his own conceptions, (which is a partiality natural enough,) than that he has found, and among ministers too, understanding so scantily enlightened or so easily perverted.

I mourn with you over the tender conscience of your collector, whose peace of mind is so inconsistent with your interest, that he cannot think he does his duty unless he wrongs you. You think the man's meaning is good! you have a world of charity, what is it to him from whose purse the tax is taken? It is his business to gather it, when that is done, he has discharged his office. You are not quite so much like Falstaff, as he is like Mr. Dombledon, of whom Falstaff would have borrowed money, and when he refused to lend him any, the knight called him a rascally worsted stocking, yea, forsooth, knave. A tender conscience is always entitled to respect, but a scrupulous one deserves suspicion. The man may be very honest for aught I know but I am sure you are so, and he ought to know that a man of your principles would not endeavour to force him upon a conduct incompatible with his oath.

I have endeavoured to comply with your request, though I am not good at writing upon a given subject. Your mother, however, comforts me by her approbation, and I steer myself in all that I produce by her judgment. If she does not understand me at the first reading, I am sure the lines are obscure, and always alter them, if she laughs, I know it is not without reason and if she says, "that's well, it will do"—I have no fear lest any body else should find

fault with it. She is my lord chamberlain, who licenses all I write.

TO MISS C—, ON HER BIRTH DAY.

How many between east and west,
Disgrace their parent earth,
Whose days constrain us to detest,
The day that gave them birth ,
Not so when Stella's natal morn,
Revolving months restore,
We can rejoice that she was born,
And wish her born once more !

If you like it, use it if not, you know the remedy It is serious, yet epigrammatic,—like a bishop at a ball !

W C

P S —I have read the Review ; it is learned and wise,
Clean, candid, and witty —Thelyphthora dies

CCCLXVI

DECLINING TO WRITE UPON SOME DESIRED MEASURES FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRIMES

TO THE REV WILLIAM L'UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I AM sensibly mortified at finding myself obliged to disappoint you , but though I have had many thoughts upon the subject you propose to my consideration, I have had none that have been favourable to the undertaking I applaud your purpose, for the sake of the principle from which it springs , but I look upon the evils you mean to animadvert upon, as too obstinate and inveterate ever to be expelled by the means you mention The very persons to whom you would address your remonstrance, are themselves sufficiently aware of their enormity years ago, to my knowledge, they were frequently the topics of conversation at polite tables , they have been frequently mentioned in both houses of parliament . and I suppose there is hardly a member of either that would not immediately assent to the necessity of reformation, were it proposed to him in a reasonable way But there it stops, and there it will for ever stop, till the majority are animated with a zeal in which they are at present deplorably defective A religious man

is unfeignedly shocked, when he reflects upon the prevalence of such crimes, a moral man must needs be so in a degree, and will affect to be much more so than he is. But how many do you suppose there are among our worthy representatives that come under either of these descriptions? If all were such, yet to new model the police of the country, which must be done in order to make even unavoidable perjury less frequent, were a task they would hardly undertake, on account of the great difficulty that would attend it. Government is too much interested in the consumption of malt-liquor to reduce the number of venders. Such plausible pleas may be offered in defence of travelling on Sundays, especially by the trading part of the world, as the whole bench of bishops would find it difficult to overrule. And with respect to the violation of oaths, till a certain name is more generally respected than it is at present, however such persons as yourself may be grieved at it, the legislature are never likely to lay it to heart. I do not mean, nor would by any means attempt to discourage you in so ludicrous an enterprise, but such is the light in which it appears to me, that I do not feel the least spark of courage qualifying or prompting me to embark in it myself. An exhortation therefore written by me, - by hopeless desponding me, - would be flat, insipid and uninteresting, and disgrace the cause, instead of serving it. If after what I have said, however, you still retain the same sentiments, *Macte esto virtute tui*, there is nobody better qualified than yourself, and may your success prove that I despaired of it without a reason.

Adieu, my dear friend, W. C.

CCCLXVII

NOTHING TO WRITE ABOUT--A SIMILE IN VERSE --FEARS FOR THE COUNTRY.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR FRIEND

I WRITE under the impression of a difficulty not easily surmounted, the want of something to say. Letter-spinning is generally more entertaining to the writer than the

reader for your sake therefore, I would avoid it, but a dearth of materials is very apt to betray one into a trifling strain, in spite of all one's endeavours to be serious

What have you done with your perverse parishioner? Perhaps when he has put a lock upon his pew, he may shut himself up in it oftener than he used to do you remember a certain story about the boy and his trunk The consciousness that the seat is become his own so emphatically that he can exclude every body else, may make him fond of it I believe many a man that keeps a carriage, rides in it because he keeps one, though sometimes he would otherwise prefer a walk

I lay by my paper for the present, — I really can go on no further

I left off on Saturday, this present being Monday morning, and I renew the attempt, in hopes that I may possibly catch some subject by the end, and be more successful

No have I seen the mails in vain
 mble and tease a tangled skein
 y bite the lip, they wratch the head,
 nd cry — 'The deuce is in the thread'
 y torture it, and jerk it round,
 ill the right end at last is found,
 hen wind, and wind, and wind away,
 And what was work is changed to play.

When I wrote the two first lines, I thought I had engaged in a hazardous enterprise for, thought I, should my poetical vein be as dry as my prose, I shall spoil the sheet, and send nothing at all, for I could on no account endure the thought of beginning again But I think I have succeeded to admiration, and am willing to flatter myself that I have seen even a worse impromptu in the newspapers

Though we live in a nook, and the world is quite unconscious that there are any such beings in it as ourselves, yet we are not unconcerned about what passes in it. The present awful crisis, big with the fate of England, engages much of our attention The action is probably over by this time, and though we know it not, the grand question is decided, whether the war shall roar in our own once peaceful fields, or whether we shall still only hear of it at a distance, I can compare the nation to no similitude more apt than

that of an ancient castle that had been for days assaulted by the battering ram. It was long before the stroke of that engine made any sensible impression, but the continual repetition at length communicated a slight tremor to the wall; the next, and the next, and the next blow increased it. Another shock puts the whole mass in motion, from the top to the foundation it bends forward, and is every moment driven farther from the perpendicular, till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it comes. Every million that has been raised within the last century, has had an effect upon the constitution like that of a blow from the aforesaid ram upon the aforesaid wall. The impulse becomes more and more important, and the impression it makes is continually augmented—unless, therefore, something extraordinary intervenes to prevent it, you will find the consequence at the end of my simile.

Yours, W. C.

• CCCCXVIII

WITH HIS POEM ON THE LILY AND THE ROSE

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

As I promised you verse, if you would send me a frank, I am not willing to return the cover without some, though I think I have already wearied you by the prolixity of my prose.

I must refer you to those unaccountable gaddings and caprices of the human mind, for the cause of this production, for in general I believe there is no man who has less to do with the ladies' checks than I have. I suppose it would be best to antedate it, and to imagine that it was written twenty years ago for my mind was never more in a trifling butterfly trim than when I composed it, even in the earliest parts of my life. And what is worse than all this, I have translated it into Latin—but that some other time.

Yours, W. C.

CCCLXIX.

REMARKS ON CHURCHILL'S POEMS.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN.

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

How apt we are to deceive ourselves where self is in question ! you say I am in your debt, and I accounted you in mine, a mistake to which you must attribute my arrears, if indeed I owe you any, for I am not backward to write where the uppermost thought is welcome.

I am obliged to you for all the books you have occasionally furnished me with. I did not indeed read many of Johnson's Classics, those of established reputation are so fresh in my memory, though many years have intervened since I made them my companions, that it was like reading what I read yesterday over again, and as to the minor Classics, I did not think them worth reading at all, I tasted most of them, and did not like them. It is a great thing to be indeed a poet, and does not happen to more than one man in a century. Churchill, the great Churchill, deserved the name of poet. I have read him twice, and some of his pieces three times over, and the last time with more pleasure than the first. The pitiful scribbler of his life seems to have undertaken that task, for which he was entirely unqualified, merely because it afforded him an opportunity to traduce him. He has inserted in it but one anecdote of consequence, for which he refers you to a novel, and introduces the story with doubts about the truth of it. But his barrenness as a biographer I could forgive, if the simpleton had not thought himself a judge of his writings, and under the erroneous influence of that thought, informed his reader that *Gotham*, *Independence*, and the *Times* were catch-pennies. *Gotham*, unless I am a greater blockhead than he, which I am far from believing, is a noble and beautiful poem, and a poem, with which I make no doubt the author took as much pains as with any he ever wrote. Making allowance, (and Dryden in his *Absalom and Achitophel* stands in need of the same indulgence,) for an unwarrantable use of Scripture, it appears to me to be a masterly performance. *Independence* is a most animated piece, full

of strength and spirit, and marked with that bold masculine character which, I think, is the great peculiarity of this writer. And the Times, (except that the subject is disgusting to the last degree,) stands equally high in my opinion. He is indeed a careless writer for the most part, but where shall we find in any of those authors who finish their works with the exactness of a Flemish pencil, those bold and daring strokes of fancy, those numbers so hazardously ventured upon and so happily finished, the matter so compressed and yet so clear, and the colouring so sprightly laid on, and yet with such a beautiful effect? In short, it is not his least praise that he is never guilty of those faults as a writer, which he lays to the charge of others. A proof that he did not judge by a borrowed standard, or from rules laid down by critics, but that he was qualified to do it by his own native powers, and his great superiority of genius. For he that wrote so much, and so fast, would through inadvertancy and hurry unavoidably have departed from rules which he might have found in books, but his own truly poetical talent was a guide which could not suffer him to err. A race horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and never makes an awkward motion though he is pushed to his utmost speed. A cart horse might perhaps be taught to play tricks in the riding school and might prance and curvet like his betters but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the business of his original. It is an affair of very little consequence perhaps to the well being of mankind, but I cannot help regretting that he died so soon. Those words of Virgil, upon the immature death of Marcellus, might serve for his epitaph.

*Obstant tibi hæc tantum fata, neque ultra
Esse sinit.*

Yours, W (

CCCXX.

ON MILTON'S BLANK VERSE—FUSELI

TO THE REV. WALTER BAGOT

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Oxford, Aug 31, 1786

I BEGAN to fear for your health, and every day said to myself,—I must write to Bagot soon, if it be only to ask

him how he does,—a measure that I should certainly have pursued long since had I been less absorbed in Homer than I am. But such are my engagements in that quarter, that they make me, I think, good for little else.

Many thanks, my friend, for the names that you have sent me. The Bagots will make a most conspicuous figure among my subscribers, and I shall not, I hope, soon forget my obligations to them.

The unacquaintedness of modern ears with the divine harmony of Milton's numbers, and the principles upon which he constructed them, is the cause of the quarrel that they have with elisions in blank verse. But where is the remedy? In vain should you or I, and a few hundreds more perhaps who have studied his versification, tell them of the superior majesty of it, and that for that majesty it is greatly indebted to those elisions. In their ears, they are discord and dissonance, they lengthen the line beyond its due limits, and are therefore not to be endured. There is a whimsical inconsistency in the judgment of modern readers in this particular. Ask them all round, whom do you account the best writer of blank verse? and they will reply to a man, Milton, to be sure, Milton against the field! Yet if a writer of the present day should construct his numbers exactly upon Milton's plan, not one in fifty of these professed admirers of Milton would endure him. The case standing thus, what is to be done? An author must either be contented to give disgust to the generality, or he must humour them by sinning against his own judgment. This latter course, so far as elisions are concerned, I have adopted as essential to my success. In every other respect I give as much variety in my measure as I can, I believe I may say as in ten syllables it is possible to give, shifting partially the pause and cadence, and accounting myself happy that modern refinement has not yet enacted laws against this also. If it had, I protest to you I would have dropped my design of translating Homer entirely, and with what an indignant unwillingness of reluctance I make them the concession that I have mentioned, Mrs Unwin can witness, who hears all my complaints upon the subject.

After having lived twenty years at Olney, we are on the point of leaving it, but shall not migrate far. We have taken a house in the village of Weston. Lady Hesketh is our good angel, by whose aid we are enabled to pass into a better air, and a more walkable country. The imprisonment that we have suffered here for so many winters has hurt us both. That we may suffer it no longer, she stoops to Olney, lifts us from our swamp, and sets us down on the elevated grounds of Weston Underwood. There, my dear friend, I shall be happy to see you, and to thank you in person for all your kindness.

I do not wonder at the judgment that you form of Fuseli, a foreigner, but you may assure yourself that, foreigner as he is, he has an exquisite taste in English verse. The man is all fire, and an enthusiast in the highest degree on the subject of Homer, and has given me more than once a jog, when I have been inclined to nap with my author. No cold water is to be feared from him that might abate my own fire, rather perhaps too much combustible.

Adieu, *mon ami*, yours faithfully

W. C.

CCCXXI

HOMER—FUSELI.

TO MR. JOHNSON.

SIR,

Olney, Sept. 2, 1786

I enclose a bill on Messrs. Child and Co. for the sum of twenty-two pounds one shilling, drawn by Mr. Walter Bagot, and dated Blithfield, Aug. 28, 1786, and add the names of his friends who have subscribed it. Some time since I wrote to desire that you would enter the Rev. Walter Bagot himself, as a subscriber of twenty pounds, and shall be obliged to you if you will now send him a receipt for that sum (for which I will account with you in due time) together with receipts for the following persons, under cover to the Rt. Hon. Lord Bagot, Blithfield near Lichfield, Staffordshire. You will observe that they have all made the full payment, and all subscribe for

royal paper and I beg that you will be so kind as to enter them on the subscription board immediately

The Rt Hon. Lord Bagot,	2 copies	R	P	6	6	0
Rt Hon Lady Bagot,	1 copy	do		3	3	0
Rt Hon Earl of Uxbridge	1 copy	do		3	3	0
Rt Rev Lord Bishop of Norwich	1 copy	do		3	3	0
Charles Chester, Esq	1 copy	do		3	3	0
William Swinnerton, Esq	1 copy	do		3	3	0

£22 1 0

Present, Sir, if you please, my compliments to your friend Mr Fuseli, and tell him that I shall be obliged to him if, when he has finished the revival of the eighth book, he will be so kind as to send it to General Cowper's in Charles Street, together with his strictures. Assure him likewise that I will endeavour by the closest attention to all the peculiarities of my original, to save him as much trouble as I can, hereafter. I now perfectly understand what it is that he requires in a translator of Homer, and being convinced of the justness of his demands, will attempt at least to conform to them. Some escapes will happen in so long a work, which he will know how to account for and to pardon. I have been employed a considerable time in the correction of the first seven books and have not yet begun the ninth, but shall in a day or two, and will send it as soon as finished. I am, Sir,

Your most humble servant, WM. COWPER

CCLXXII

TELLING HIM OF THE REPROOF WHICH MR NEWTON HAD ADDRESSED TO THEM, ON THEIR CHANGE OF LIFE.

TO THE REV. WILLIAM UNWIN

MY DEAR WILLIAM,

Olney, Sept 24, 1786.

So interesting a concern as your tutorship of the young gentleman in question cannot have been so long in a state of indecision without costing you much anxiety. We have sympathized with you under it all, but are glad to be in-

formed that the long delay is not chargeable upon Mr Hornby. Bishops are *kaka Onpha, vachipa apol*. You have heard, I know, from Lady Hesketh, and she has exculpated me from all imputation of wilful silence, from which, indeed, of yourself you are so good as to discharge me, in consideration of my present almost endless labour. I have nothing to say in particular on the subject of Homer, except that I am duly advancing in the work with all the dispatch that a due concern for my own credit in the result will allow.

You have had your troubles, and we ours. This day three weeks your mother received a letter from Mr Newton, which she has not yet answered, nor is likely to answer hereafter. It gave us both much concern, but her more than me. I suppose because my mind being necessarily occupied in my work, I had not so much leisure to browse upon the wormwood that it contained. The purport of it is a direct accusation of me, and of her, an accusation implied, that we have both strayed into forbidden paths, and lead a life unbecoming the Gospel. That many of my friends in London are grieved, and the simple people of Olney astonished that he never so much doubted of my restoration to Christian privileges as now—in short, that I converse too much with people of the world, and find too much pleasure in doing so. He concludes with putting your mother in mind that there is still an intercourse between London and Olney, by which he means to insinuate that we cannot offend against the decorum that we are bound to observe, but the news of it will most certainly be conveyed to him. We do not at all doubt it, we never knew a lie hatch'd at Olney that waited long for a bearer, and though we do not wonder to find ourselves made the subjects of a false accusation in a place ever fruitful of such productions, we do and must wonder a little, that he should listen to them with so much credulity. I say this, because if he had heard only the truth, or had believed no more than the truth, he would not, I think, have found either me censurable or your mother. And that *she* should be suspected of irregularities is the most wonderful, (for wonderful it would be at any rate,) because

she sent him not long before a letter conceived in such strains of piety and spirituality as ought to have convinced him that she at least was no wanderer. But what is the fact, and how do we spend our [time] in reality? What are the deeds for which we have been represented as thus criminal? Our present course of life differs in nothing from that which we have both held these thirteen years, except that, after great civilities shown us, and many advances made on the part of the Throcks, we visit them. This we visit also at Gayhurst—that we have frequently taken amusements with my cousin in her carriage, and that I have sometimes taken a walk with her on a Sunday evening and sometimes by myself, which however your mother has never done. These are the only novelties in our practice—and if by these procedures, so mollified in themselves, we yet give offence, offence must needs be given God and our own consciences acquit us, and we acknowledge no other judges.

The two families with whom we have picked up this astonishing intercourse are as harmless in their conversation and manners as can be found anywhere. And as to my poor cousin, the only crime that she is guilty of against the people of Olney is, that she has fed the hungry, clothed the naked, and administered comfort to the sick—except indeed that, by her great kindness—she has given us a little lift in point of condition and circumstances, and has thereby excited envy in some who have not the knack of rejoicing in the prosperity of others. And this I take to be the root of the matter.

My dear William, I do not know that I should have teased your nerves and spirits with this disagreeable theme, had not Mr. Newton talked of applying to you in particular. He would have done it, he says, when he saw you last but had not time. You are now qualified to inform him as minutely as ourselves could of all our enormities. Adieu!

Our sincerest love to yourself and yours, WM. C.

CCCLXXIII

A BOOK OF HIS TRANSLATION GONE TO THE BOT-
TOM OF THE THAMES—LADY HESKETH ABOUT
TO LEAVE THEM

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ.

Olney, Oct. 6, 1786

' You have not heard, I suppose, that the ninth book of my translation is at the bottom of the Thames. But it is even so. A storm overtook it in its way to Kingston, and it sunk, together with the whole cargo of the boat in which it was a passenger—not figuratively showing, I hope, by its submersion, the fate of all the rest. My kind and generous cousin, who leaves nothing undone that she thinks can conduce to my comfort, encouragement, or convenience, is my transcriber also. *She* wrote the copy, and *she* will have to write it again.——*How* the time is the deuce! I have a thousand reasons to lament that the time approaches when we must lose her.——I could a winter's summer and most delightful one—but the winter itself we must spend without her.

W. C.

CCCLXXIV

FEELINGS ON REMOVING FROM OLNEY TO WEST-
ON REPORT THAT HE HAS TURNED PAPIST—
MR UNWIN'S ILLNESS

TO THE REV. JOHN NEWTON

MY DEAR FRIEND Westcott Wood, Nov. 17, 1786

My usual time of answering your letter, having been unavoidably engrossed by occasions that would not be thrust aside, I have been obliged to postpone the payment of my debt for a whole week. I venture it is not without some delicency that I discharge it, which yet will easily believe, when I tell you that this is only the second day that has seen us inhabitants of our new abode. When God peeks to a chaos, it becomes a scene of order and harmony in a moment—but when his creature have thrown one house into confusion by leaving it—and another by tumbling

themselves and their goods into it, not less than many days' labour and contrivance is necessary to give them their proper places. And it belongs to furniture of all kinds, however convenient it may be in its place, to be a nuisance out of it. We find ourselves here in a comfortable dwelling. Such it is in itself, and my cousin, who has spared no expense in dressing it up for us, has made it a genteel one. Such, at least, it will be when its contents are a little harmonized. She left us on Tuesday, and on Wednesday, in the evening, Mrs. Unwin and I took possession. I could not help giving a last look to my old prison and its precincts, and though I cannot easily account for it, having been miserable there so many years, felt something like a heart-ache when I took my last leave of a scene, that certainly in itself had nothing to excite affection. But I recollected that I had once been happy there, and could not, without tears in my eyes, bid adieu to a place in which God had so often found me. The human mind is a great mystery: mine, at least, appeared to me to be such upon this occasion. I found that I not only had a tenderness for that ruinous abode, because it had once known me happy in the presence of God: but that even the distress I had suffered for so long a time on account of his absence, had endeared it to me as much. I was weary of every object, had long wished for a change, yet could not take leave without a pang at parting. What consequences are to attend our removal, God only knows. I know well that it is not in situation to effect a cure of melancholy like mine. The change, however, has been entirely a providential one: for much as I wished it, I never uttered that wish, except to Mrs. Unwin. When I learned that the house was to be let, and had seen it, I had a strong desire that Lady Hesketh should take it for herself, if she should happen to like the country. That desire, indeed, is not exactly fulfilled, and yet, upon the whole, is exceeded. We are the tenants: but she assures us that we shall often have her for a guest, and here is room enough for us all. You, I hope, my dear friend, and Mrs. Newton, will want no assurances to convince you that you will always be received here with the sincerest welcome. More welcome than you

have been, you cannot be, but better accommodated you may and will be.

I have not proceeded thus far without many interruptions, and though my paper is small, shall be obliged to make my letter still smaller. Our own removal is I believe the only news of Olney. Concerning this you will hear much, and much I doubt not that will have no truth in it. It is already reported there, and has been indeed for some time, that I am turned Papist. You will know how to treat a lie like this which proves nothing but the malignity of its author; but other tales you may possibly hear that will not so readily refute themselves. Thus, however, I trust you will always find true, that neither Mrs. Unwin nor myself shall have so conducted ourselves in our new neighbourhood, as that you shall have any occasion to be grieved on our account.

Mr. Unwin has been ill of a fever at Winchester, but by a letter from Mr. Thornton we learn that he is recovering, and hopes soon to travel. His Mrs. Unwin has joined him at that place.

Adieu, my dear friend. Mrs. Unwin's affectionate remembrances and mine conclude me ever yours, W. C.

CCCLXXV

COMFORTS OF HIS NEW ABODE

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston Lodge, Nov. 26. 1786.

It is my birthday, my beloved cousin, and I determine to employ a part of it, that it may not be destitute of festivity, in writing to you. The dark thick fog that has obscured it, would have been a burthen to me at Olney, but here I have hardly attended to it. The neatness and snugness of our abode compensate all the drariness of the season, and, whether the ways are wet or dry, our house at least is always warm and commodious. On for you, my cousin, to partake these comforts with us. I will not begin already to tease you upon that subject, but Mrs. Unwin remembers to have heard from your own lips, that you hate London

in the spring. Perhaps therefore by that time, you may be glad to escape from a scene which will be every day growing more disagreeable, that you may enjoy the comforts of the lodge. You well know that the best house has a desolate appearance unfurnished. This house accordingly, since it has been occupied by us and our *meubles*, is as much superior to what it was when you saw it, as you can imagine. The parlour is even elegant. When I say that the parlour is elegant, I do not mean to insinuate that the study is not so. It is neat, warm, and silent, and a much better study than I deserve, if I do not produce in it an incomparable translation of Homer. I think every day of those lines of Milton, and congratulate myself on having obtained, before I am quite superannuated, what he seems not to have hoped for sooner.

"And may at length my weary age
Find out the peaceful hermitage!"

For if it is not an hermitage, at least it is a much better thing, and you must always understand, my dear, that when poets talk of cottages, hermitages, and such like things, they mean a house with six sashes in front, two comfortable parlours, a smart stair-case, and three bedchambers of convenient dimensions, in short, exactly such a house as this.

The Throckmortons continue the most obliging neighbours in the world. One morning last week, they both went with me to the cliff,—a scene my dear, in which you would delight beyond measure, but which you cannot visit except in the spring or autumn. The heat of summer and the clinging dirt of winter would destroy you. What is called the cliff, is no cliff, nor at all like one, but a beautiful terrace, sloping gently down to the Ouse, and from the brow of which, though not lofty, you have a view of such a valley as makes that which you see from the hills near Olney, and which I have had the honour to celebrate, an affair of no consideration.

Wintry as the weather is, do not suspect that it confines me. I ramble daily, and every day change my ramble. Wherever I go, I find short grass under my feet, and when

I have travelled perhaps five miles, come home with shoes not at all too dirty for a drawing room. I was pacing yesterday under the elms, that surround the field in which stands the great alcove, when lifting my eyes I saw two black gentee figures bolt through a hedge into the path where I was walking. You guess already who they were, and that they could be nobody but our neighbours. They had seen me from a hill at a distance, and had traversed a great turnip field to get at me. You see then for my dear, that I am in some request. Alas! in too much request with some people. The verses of Cidwalliler have found me at last.

I am charmed with your account of our little cousin at Kensington. If the world does not spoil him hereafter, he will be a valuable man.

Good night, and may God bless thee. W. C.

CCCCXXXI

**MR. UNWIN'S DEATH. LETTER COMMUNICATING
IT FROM MR. HENRY THORNTON.**

TO LADY HESKETH.

MY DEAREST COUSIN,

Dec. 4. 1786.

It distresses me to think that this cannot reach you before the newspapers will inform you of the death of our dear friend at Winchester, an event for which after the favourable accounts I sent you you cannot be but in differently prepared. Those accounts however were such as we received ourselves, and were well warranted at the time when they were sent to us by such appearances as seemed to afford the most reasonable hope of his recovery. A sudden turn in his distemper has, nevertheless, baffled that hope, and has in a few moments bereaved us, respecting poor Unwin, of every consolation except the invaluable certainty of his being thither gone whence none who loved him as he deserved can deliberately wish him to return. Instead of saying more, my dear, on this melancholy subject, I will subjoin a copy of Mr Henry Thornton's last letter, which we received this morning. It came accompanied by another which ought to have reached us by the

preceding post, but which being delayed by some accident, came with it. Poor Mrs. Unwin you will suppose is in great affliction, but she bears her severe heart-aches with a resignation to the will of God, that does him and herself honour. She sends her love to you. Here follows the letter —

MADAM,

I wrote you a discouraging letter yesterday, which my fears for Mr. Unwin very naturally suggested even at the time when I wrote it. My letter was written on Tuesday evening. His fever was then unabated, though he was free from pain, clear and distinct in his head and recollection, and more composed than he had been at almost any period of his illness. On Tuesday night, seeing no very certain and instant danger, I prevailed on Mrs. Unwin to lie down for a few hours, while the physician and I sat up with him. About three in the morning I had about half an hour's very comfortable conversation with him alone. He was as sensible of his danger as I could be, and as calm and collected as ever he was in his life, mentioned many of his friends, to whom he desired to be remembered, and particularly named yourself, as well as Mr. Cowper and Lady Hesketh. He talked even of his own interment, and of every thing that it might be useful to me (as a joint executor with his wife) to know. He desired me to read a prayer to him, and one or two psalms. The hope he expressed of eternal happiness was a very humble one, (as indeed it always has been,) but to his friends by no means therefore the less sure. His mind was calm upon this and every other subject. He asked me if there were no hopes at all of his recovery, to which I answered him, that there were little or none. He continued therefore perfectly sensible of his own dissolution for several hours after, and was so calm and so little dismayed, that those around him who knew the irritability of his habit and his fears on this as well as every affecting subject, were much comforted during their attention to him. About seven in the morning Mrs. Unwin came down to him, while I lay down for an hour or two. He was still sensible. Between ten and eleven his head seemed a

little confused, but no other alteration appeared. In half an hour after, his doctor from Salisbury went up to see him, and he desired to be raised in his bed as usual, but as he seemed, while they roused him, to breathe rather harder than before, the doctor hinted to me that I should lead Mrs. Unwin (who had helped to raise him) out of the room, and in a few minutes his breath gradually spent itself without any appearance of struggle.

This, my dear, is not the end of the letter, but it is all that relates to the death-bed circumstances of this valuable man. The disorder that was immediately followed by these dying symptoms was in his bowels, and seized him, I think, the day before his decease. It did not indeed last many hours, but seems to have left him perfectly exhausted. The fever was a putrid one. Mr. Thornton caught it first, but being stronger soon recovered. Poor Unwin fell its victim. What we must do now, my dear, for a tutor to little Hesketh I know not. My stock of recommendation was soon exhausted. Mr. Hornby will be himself, I suppose, the likeliest person to find a third. Surely there was never any thing more extraordinary than the deaths of two, chosen with such religious attention to their qualifications, just before they could enter on their office. Man boasts himself wise, yet to man is every thing inscrutable.

The chairs lie still in the warehouse of the inn at Smithfield. We sent this morning to enquire after them, and Rogers the Great knows nought about them. We must hope for them next week. Mr. Newman writes me word that they are at this time doing me the honour to read my *'Task at Freemasons' Hall*. It could not have a more effectual advertisement, nor one more likely to occasion a speedy call for a third edition. Perhaps it may have the fate of John Galswin, who was little known or noticed for a long time after his first appearance, and then made noise enough. I have a letter from a Mr. Biddlecombe of Somersford, near Christ Church, in the New Forest, expressive of the pleasure that my volumes have given to him, and inviting me to visit him if I should ever find myself in that part of Hampshire. I answer it by this post. You shall

see it, my dear, as soon as I can send it franked. I am obliged also to write to Mr. H. Thornton by this post, which occasions you a shorter letter, - but I have still something to say. I have finished the twelfth book, and when Mr. Throckmorton and I were walking together on Friday morning, I told him that I had a design to call upon Mrs. T. for her obliging and kind offer made me last summer. He immediately recollected it, and said with a smile - "You mean, I suppose, to transcribe for you?" She will do it with great pleasure" - The next morning I sent her that same twelfth book, and understand that she has been hard at work. Unfortunately they leave the country on Tuesday, so that she will not be able, I suppose, to finish. She told me however this morn'g, when she stopped on horseback at the gate, that she had transcribed eleven pages. He was with me when she called, and they are gone together to Gayhurst.

Adieu, my precious! I am going to refresh myself with air and sunshine this fine morning, having been imprisoned all yesterday by the rain.

Ever your affectionate WM. COWPER

We shall be forced to trouble you, my coz, on this sad occasion. Mrs. U. begs that you will be so kind as to let Mrs. Eaton make her up two mourning caps. The only two persons who could make them at Olney lie in, or are just on the point of it. And I am in want of a pair of black shoe-buckles.

CCCLXXVII

ON THE SAME SUBJECT

TO LADY HESKETH

The Lodge, Dec. 4, 1786

I SENT YOU, my dear, a melancholy letter, and I do not know that I shall now send you one very unlike it. Not that any thing occurs in consequence of our late loss more afflictive than was to be expected, but the mind does not perfectly recover its tone after a shock like that which has been felt so lately. This I observe, that though my expe-

rience has long since taught me, that this is a world of shadows, and that it is the more prudent as well as the more Christian course to possess the comforts that we find in it, as if we possessed them not, it is no easy matter to reduce this doctrine into practice. We forget that God who gave them, may, when he pleases, take them away, and that perhaps it may please him to take them at a time when we least expect or are least disposed to part from them. Thus it has happened in the present case. There never was a moment in Unwin's life, when there seemed to be more urgent want of him than the moment in which he died. He had attained to an age when if they are at any time useful, men become useful to their families, their friends and the world. His parish began to feel, and to be sensible of the advantages of his ministry. The clergy around him were many of them led by his example. His children were thriving under his own tuition and management, and his eldest boy is likely to feel his loss severely, being, by his years in some respect qualified to understand the value of such a parent, by his literary proficiency too clever for a schoolboy, and too young at the same time for the university. The removal of a man in the prime of life of such a character, and with such connections, seems to make a void in society that can never be filled. God seemed to have made him just what he was, that he might be a blessing to others, and when the influence of his character and abilities began to be felt removed him. These are mysteries, my dear, that we must contemplate without astonishment but which will nevertheless be explained hereafter, and must in the mean time be received in silence. It is well for his mother that she has spent her life in the practice of an habitual inactivity in the dispensations of Providence else I know that this stroke would have been heavier after all that she has suffered upon another account, than she could have borne. She derives, as she well may great consolation from the thought that he lived the life, and died the death of a Christian. The consequence is, if possible, more unavoidable than the most mathematical conclusion, that therefore he is happy. So farewell, my friend Unwin 'the first man

for whom I conceived a friendship after my removal from St Alban's, and for whom I cannot but still continue to feel a friendship, though I shall see thee with these eyes no more

W C

CCCLXXVIII
ON THE SAME SUBJECT

TO ROBERT SMITH, ESQ

Weston Underwood, near Olney

MY DEAR SIR,

Dec 9, 1786

WE have indeed suffered a great loss by the death of our friend Unwin, and the shock that attended it was the more severe, as till within a few hours of his decease there seemed to be no very alarming symptoms. All the accounts that we received from Mr Henry Thornton, who acted like a true friend on the occasion, and with a tenderness toward all concerned, that does him great honour, encouraged our hopes of his recovery, and Mrs Unwin herself found him on her arrival at Winchester so cheerful, and in appearance so likely to live, that her letter also seemed to promise us all that we could wish on the subject. But an unexpected turn in his distemper, which suddenly seized his bowels, dashed all our hopes, and deprived us almost immediately of a man whom we must ever regret. His mind having been from his infancy deeply tinged with religious sentiments, he was always impressed with a sense of the importance of the great change of all, and on former occasions, when at any time he found himself indisposed, was consequently subject to distressing alarms and apprehensions. But in this last instance, his mind was from the first composed and easy, his fears were taken away, and succeeded by such a resignation as warrants us in saying, "that God made all his bed in his sickness." I believe it is always thus, where the heart, though upright toward God as Unwin's assuredly was, is yet troubled with the fear of death. When death indeed comes, he is either welcome, or at least has lost his sting

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I have known many such instances and his mother, from the moment that she learned with what tranquillity he was favoured in his illness, for that very reason expected that it would be his last. Yet not with so much certainty, but that the favourable accounts of him at length, in a great measure, superseded that persuasion.

She begs me to assure you, my dear sir, how sensible she is, as well as myself, of the kindness of your inquiries. She suffers this stroke, not with more patience and submission than I expected, for I never knew her hurried by any affliction into the loss of either, but in appearance at least, and at present, with less injury to her health than I apprehended. She observed to me, after reading your kind letter, that though it was a proof of the greatness of her loss, it yet afforded her pleasure, though a melancholy one, to see how much her son had been loved and valued by such a person as yourself.

Mrs. Unwin wrote to her daughter in law, to invite her and the family thither, hoping that a change of scene, and a situation so pleasant as this may be of service to her, but we have not yet received her answer. I have good hope however that great as her affliction must be, she will yet be able to support it, for she well knows whither to resort for consolation.

The virtues and amiable qualities of our friends are the things for which we most wish to keep them, but they are on the other hand the very things that in particular ought to reconcile us to their departure. We had ourselves sometimes connected with and engaged in a direction too to a person of whose readiness and abilities for another life we cannot have the highest opinion. The death of such men has a bitterness as it both to themselves and survivors, which, thank God, is not to be found in the death of Unwin.

I know, my dear sir, how much you valued him, and I know also how much he valued you. With respect to him, all is well, and of you, if I should survive you, which perhaps is not very probable, I shall say the same.

In the mean time, believe me with the warmest wishes for your health and happiness, and with Mrs. Unwin's affectionate respects

Yours, my dear sir,

Most faithfull,

W. C.

CCCLXXIX

**ARGUING AGAINST A SUPERSTITIOUS FEELING
WHICH SHE HAD EXPRESSED CONCERNING
UNWIN'S DEATH.**

TO LADY HESKETH

Weston, Dec 9, 1786.

I AM perfectly sure that you are mistaken, though I do not wonder at it, considering the singular nature of the event in the judgment that you form of poor Unwin's death as it affects the interest of his intended pupil. When a tutor was wanted for him, you sought out the wisest and best man within the circle of your connexions. It pleased God to take him home to himself. Men eminently wise and good are very apt to die, because they are fit to do so. You found in Unwin a man worthy to succeed him, and He, in whose hands are the issues of life and death, seeing no doubt that Unwin was ripe for a removal into a better state, removed him also. The matter viewed in this light seems not so wonderful as to refuse all explanation, except such as in a melancholy moment you have given to it. And I am so convinced that the little boy's destiny had no influence at all in hastening the death of his tutors elect, that were it not impossible on more accounts than one that I should be able to serve him in that capacity, I would without the least fear of dying a moment the sooner, offer myself to that office, I would even do it, were I conscious of the same fitness for another and a better state, that I believe them to have been both endowed with in that case. I perhaps might die too, but it I should it would not be on account of that connexion. Neither, my dear, had your interference with the business any thing to do with the catastrophe. Your whole conduct in it must have been acceptable in the sight of God, as it was directed by principles of the purest benevolence.

I have not touched Homer to-day. Yesterday was one of my terrible seasons, and when I arose this morning, I found that I had not sufficiently recovered myself to engage in such an occupation. Having letters to write, I the more willingly gave myself a dispensation. Good night.

Yours ever,

W C

CCCLXXX
ON THEIR LATE LOSS, AND THEIR REMOVAL TO
WESTON

TO JOSEPH HILL, ESQ

MY DEAR FRIEND,

Weston, Dec 9, 1786

WE had just begun to enjoy the pleasantness of our new situation, to find at least as much comfort in it as the season of the year would permit, when affliction found us out in our retreat, and the news reached us of the death of Mr Unwin. He had taken a western tour with Mr. Henry Thornton, and in his return, at Winchester, was seized with a putrid fever, which sent him to his grave. He is gone to it, however though young, as fit for it as age itself could have made him: regretted indeed, and always to be regretted by those who knew him for he had every thing that makes a man valuable both in his principles and in his manners, but leaving still this consolation to his surviving friends, that he was desirable in this world chiefly because he was so well prepared for a better.

I find myself here situated exactly to my mind. Weston is one of the prettiest villages in England, and the walks about it at all seasons of the year delightful. I know that you will rejoice with me in the change that we have made, and for which I am altogether indebted to Lady Hesketh. It is a change as great as (to compare metropolitan things with rural) from St. Giles's to Grosvenor Square. Our house is in all respects commodious, and in some degree elegant: and I cannot give you a better idea of that which we have left than by telling you the present candidates for it are a publican and a shoemaker.

W. C.

CCCLXXXI
TRIPLING INCIDENTS INTERESTING TO AN
ABSENT FRIEND

TO LADY HESKETH

Lin Lodge, Dec 11, 1786

SHRIMPSHIRE my dearest cousin, in his commentary on the vulgar adage which says, Second thoughts are best observes that the *third* thought generally resolves itself into the *first*

Thus it has happened to me. My first thought was to effect a transposition of the old glasses into the new frame, my second, that perhaps both the old glasses and the new frame might be broken in the experiment, and my third, nevertheless, to make the trial. Accordingly I walked down to Olney this day, referred the matter to the watchmaker's consideration, and he has succeeded in the attempt to a wonder. I am at this moment peering through the same medium as usual, but with the advantage of a mere ornamental mounting. I conjecture, by the way, from a passage in your note that accompanied the parcel, that I am indebted not *only* to you for this new accession to my elegant accommodations, but to some Incognito likewise. I beg that you will present my thanks accordingly. The clerk of the parish has made me a new pair of straps to my buckles, and the gingerbread, by its genial warmth, has delivered me since dinner from a distension of stomach that was immoderately troublesome, so that I am the better for you, my dear, from head to foot. Longtime I in vain endeavoured to make myself master of the lump and was obliged at last to call in William to my assistance. Now there are certain things which great geniuses miss and which men born without any understanding at all not immediately. In justification of the truth of this remark, William, who is a lump of dough, who never can be more dead than he is till he has been buried a month, explained it to me in a moment accordingly we have used it twice, to my great satisfaction.

I sent Busch a note by the coach that it went up this morning, and certainly no man could better deserve it, though it was one of the funniest that ever was seen. I could not resist the impulse that I felt to acknowledge my obligations to his critical exertions, and yet shall be sorry that I complied with it in consequence of my civility he should become at all less rigorous in his demands or less severe in his animadversions. I am on the point of finishing the correction of the ninth book, which I have now adjusted to two sheets filled with his strictures. He observes at the close of them, that to execute a translation of this book in particular, with felicity, appears to him a prodigious task. He considers it,

and I think justly, as one of the most consummate efforts of genius handed down to us from antiquity, and calls upon me for my utmost exertions. I have not failed to make them, with what success will be seen hereafter; but of this I am sure, that I have much improved it. The good-natured Padre of the Hall has offered me, in Mrs. Throckmorton's absence, his transcribing assistance, of which I shall avail myself, and deliver over to him the book in question in a day or two.

Mr. Chester paid me a morning visit about the middle of last week. He was, though a man naturally reserved, chatty and good humoured on the occasion, and when he took leave begged that I would not put myself to inconvenience for the sake of returning his visit with a punctilious alacrity in this wet and dirty season—an allowance for which I was obliged to him, for since we now live five miles asunder, and I never ride, it does not at present occur to me by what means I could possibly get it him.

Our old house is not yet tenanted, but there are candidates for it. There are two who would divide the building between them—a shoemaker, and the ale-monger at the Horse and Groom. The carpenter in the mean time has assured Mr. Smith, the landlord, that unless it be well propped and speedily it will infallibly fall. Thank you, my dear, for saving our poor noddles from such imminent danger.

I learned to day at the Bull, that the liquors which the General has sent me I may expect to see here to-morrow; there are our hampers of sherry, and one of brandy and rum. The looking glass which you destined to the study,—that I saw which came out of your chamber at the vicarage—so have continued to put up in the parlour. It is quite big enough and makes a very smart appearance. The other which you may remember to have seen in my chamber, at Olney, we have transferred to Nibbs, who, being paid for a new frame is to furnish us with a new glass for it.

What confise have you taken with our friend Arnott? Has Lord Cowper discovered my intentions to perform the part of a Meleager toward me, or did he leave England

forgetful that there was so important a character in it as myself? His little boy, I hope, has recovered. It would grieve me if the family should lose so much generosity as seems to be included in that small bosom.

The cloud that I mentioned to you, my cousin, has passed away, or perhaps the skirts of it may still hang over me. I feel myself, however, tolerably brisk, and tell you so because I know you will be glad to hear it. The grimmers at John Gilpin little dream what the author sometimes suffers. How I hated myself yesterday for having ever wrote it!

May God bless thee, my dear 'adieu

Ever yours, W. C.

Soon after this reaches you, we hope that you will receive a turkey. It was Mrs. Throckmorton's legacy to us when she went. It never had the honour to be crammed, for she crams none, but perhaps may not be the worse in flavour on that account. She fed it duly with her own hand.

CCCCXXVII

THANKFUL FOR PRAISE—IN NO DANGER OF PER- VERSION TO POPERY.

TO LADY HUSKISS

Weston, Dec. 21, 1786

YOUR welcome letter, my beloved cousin, which ought by the date to have arrived on Sunday, being by some untoward accident delayed, came not till yesterday. It came however, and has relieved me from a thousand distressing apprehensions on your account.

The dew of your intelligence has refreshed my poetic laurels. A little praise now and then is very good for your hard working poet, who is apt to grow languid, and perhaps careless without it. Praise I find affects us as money does. The more a man gets of it, with the more vigilance he watches over and preserves it. Such at least is its effect on me, and you may assure yourself that I will never lose a mite of it for want of care.

I have already invited the good Padre in general terms, and he shall positively dine here next week, whether,

will or not. I do not at all suspect that his kindness to Protestants has any thing insidious in it, any more than I suspect that he transcribes Homer for me with a view for my conversion. He would find me a tough piece of business. I can tell him, for when I had no religion at all, I had yet a terrible dread of the Pope. How much more now!

I should have sent you a longer letter, but was obliged to devote my last evening to the melancholy employment of composing a Latin inscription for the tomb-stone of poor William, two copies of which I wrote out and enclosed, one to Henry Thornton, and one to Mr. Newton. Homer stands by me biting his thumbs and swears that if I do not leave off directly I will choke me with bastly Greek that shall stick in my throat for ever.

CCCCXXXIII

WISHES TO RECEIVE HER LETTERS ON SUNDAY
COMMISSIONS - A WELSH POET

TO LADY HESKETH

Two Lines Dec. 24. 1786

You may be by no means my dearest coz, but in the plan that has suggested itself to you on the supposed loss of your letter. In the first place I choose that my Sundays like the Sundays of other people shall be distinguished by something that shall make me look forward to them with agreeable expectation and for that reason desire that they may always bring me a letter from you. In the next place, if I know when to expect a letter, I know likewise when to *expect* a letter: if it happens not to come, a circumstance of some importance, considering how excessively careless we are at the Swan, where letters are sometimes forgotten, and then to arrive at their destination if no inquiry is made, till some days have passed after their arrival at Olney. It has happened frequently to me to receive a letter long after all the rest have been delivered, and the Padre assured me that Mr. Throckmorton has sent notes three several times to Mrs. Marriot, complaining of this neglect. For these reasons, my dear, thou must write still on Saturdays, and as often on other days as thou pleasest.

The screens came safe, and one of them is at this moment interposed between me and the fire, much to the comfort of my peepers. The other of them being fitted up with a screw that was useless, I have consigned to proper hands, that it may be made as serviceable as its brother. They are very neat, and I account them a great acquisition. Our carpenter assures me that the lameness of the chairs was not owing to any injury received in their journey, but that the maker never properly finished them. They were not high when they came, and in order to reduce them to a level, we have lowered them an inch. Thou knowest, child, that the short foot could not be lengthened, for which reason we shortened the long ones. The box containing the plate and the brooms reached us yesterday, and nothing had suffered the least damage by the way. Every thing is smart, every thing is elegant, and we admire them all. The short candle sticks are short enough. I am now writing with those upon the table, Mrs. U is reading opposite, and they suit us both exactly. With the money that you have in hand, you may purchase, my dear, at your most convenient time, a tea-urn that which we have at present having never been handsome, and being now old and patched. A parson once, as he walked across the parlour, pushed it down with his belly, and it never perfectly recovered itself. We want likewise a tea-waiter, meaning, if you please, such a one as you may remember to have seen at the Hall, a wooden one. To which you may add, from the same fund, three or four yards of yard wide muslin, wherewithal to make neckcloths for my worship. If after all these disbursements any thing should be left in the bottom of the purse, we shall be obliged to you if you will expend it in the purchase of silk pocket-handkerchiefs. There, my precious—I think I have charged thee with commissions in plenty.

You neither must nor shall deny us the pleasure of sending to you such small matters as we do. As to the partridges, you may recollect possibly, when I remind you of it, that I never eat them. they refuse to pass my stomach, and Mrs. Unwin rejoiced in receiving them only because she could pack them away to you—therefore never lay us un-

der any embargoes of this kind, for I tell you beforehand, that we are both incorrigible. My beloved cousin, the first thing I open my eyes upon in a morning, is it not the bed in which you have laid me? Did you not, in our old dismal parlour at Olney, give me the tea on which I break fast?—the chocolate that I drank at noon, and the table at which I dine?—the every thing, in short, that I possess in the shape of convenience, is it not all from you? and is it possible, think you, we should either of us overlook an opportunity of making such a tiny acknowledgment of your kindness? Assure yourself that never, while my name is Gile's Gingerbread, will I dishonour my glorious ancestry, and my illustrious appellation, by so unworthy a conduct. I love you at my heart, and so does Mrs. U and we must say think you, and send you a pepper-corn when we can. So thank you, my dear, for the brawn and the chine, and for all the good things that you announce, and at present I will, for your sake, say no more of thanksgiving.

I have answered the Welshman's letter, and have a hope that I shall hear no more of him. He desired my advice, whether to publish or not. In answer, I congratulated him on the possession of a poetical talent, with which he might always amuse himself when fatigued with the weightier matters of the law. As to publication, I recommended it to him by all means, as the principal incentive to exertion. And with regard to his probability of success, I told him that, as he had, I understood, already made the experiment by appearing in print, he could judge how that matter stood, better than I or any man could do it for him. What could I say, my dear? I was really unwilling to mortify a brother bard, and yet could not avoid it but at the expense of common honesty.

The Poëtre is to dine with us on Thursday next. I am highly pleased with him, and intend to make all possible advances to a nearer acquaintance. Why he is so silent in company I know not. Perhaps he is reserved, like some other people, or perhaps he holds it unsuitable to his function to be forward in mixed conversation. Certain it is, that he has enough to say when he and I are together.

He has transcribed the ninth book for me, and is now transcribing the twelfth, which Mrs Throckmorton left unfinished. Poor Teedon has dined with us once, and it did me good to stuff him.

We have heard from the poor widow, after whom you so kindly enquire. She answered a letter of Mrs Unwin's about a week since. Her answer was affectionate, tender, and melancholy to a great degree, but not without expressions of hope and confidence in God. We understand that she has suffered much in her health, as well as in her mind. It could not be otherwise, for she was attached to her husband in the extreme. We have learned by a sidewind, since I mentioned her last, that Billy left every thing, or almost every thing, to the children. But she has at present one hundred pounds a year, and will have another hundred hereafter, if she outlives Mrs U, being jointured in her estate. In the mean time, her sister lives with her, who has, I believe, determined never to marry, from which circumstance she must doubtless derive advantage. She spent some time at Clapham, after her return from Winchester, is now with Mr John Unwin at Croydon, and goes soon to her gloomy mansion, as she calls it, in Essex. We asked her hither, in hope that a little time spent at Weston might be of use to her, but her affairs would not suffer her to come. She is greatly to be pitied, and whether she will ever recover the stroke is, I think, very uncertain.

"I had some time since a very clever letter from Henry C, which I answered as well as I could, but not in kind. I seem to myself immoderately stupid on epistolary occasions, and especially when I wish to shine. Such I seem now, and such to have been ever since I began. So much the worse for you. Pray, my dear, send me a bit of Indian glue, and an almanack.

It gives me true pleasure to learn that the General at least says he is better, but it would give me much more to hear others say the same. Thank your sister for her instructions concerning the lamp, which shall be exactly followed.

I am, my dearest, Your most Gingerbread Giles, &c
WM COWPER.

